

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/4527>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

God and Mrs Thatcher: Religion and Politics in 1980s Britain

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2010

Liza Filby
University of Warwick
University ID Number: 0558769

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

..... Date.....

Abstract

The core theme of this thesis explores the evolving position of religion in the British public realm in the 1980s. Recent scholarship on modern religious history has sought to relocate Britain's 'secularization moment' from the industrialization of the nineteenth century to the social and cultural upheavals of the 1960s. My thesis seeks to add to this debate by examining the way in which the established Church and Christian doctrine continued to play a central role in the politics of the 1980s. More specifically it analyses the conflict between the Conservative party and the once labelled 'Tory party at Prayer', the Church of England. Both Church and state during this period were at loggerheads, projecting contrasting visions of the Christian underpinnings of the nation's political values.

The first part of this thesis addresses the established Church. It begins with an examination of how the Church defined its role as the 'conscience of the nation' in a period of national fragmentation and political polarization. It then goes on to explore how the Anglican leadership, Church activists and associated pressure groups together subjected Thatcherite neo-liberal economics to moral scrutiny and upheld social democratic values as the essence of Christian doctrine. The next chapter analyses how the Church conceptualized Christian citizenship and the problems it encountered when it disseminated this message to its parishioners.

The second half of this study focuses on the contribution of Christian thought to the New Right. Firstly, it explores the parallels between political and religious conservatism in this period and the widespread disaffection with liberal Anglicanism, revealing how Parliament became one of the central platforms for the traditionalist Anglican cause. Secondly, it demonstrates how those on the right argued for the Christian basis of economic liberalism and of the moral superiority of capitalism over socialism. The next chapter focuses on the public doctrine of Margaret Thatcher, detailing how she drew upon Christian doctrine, language and imagery to help shape and legitimise her political vision and reinforce her authority as leader. Finally, the epilogue traces the why this Christian-centric dialogue between the Church and Conservative government eventually dissipated and was superseded by a much more fundamental issue in the 1990s as both the ruling elite and the Church were forced to recognise the religious diversity within British society.

Acknowledgements

I have accrued many debts in the writing and researching of this thesis: financial, intellectual and personal. First and foremost, this thesis would not have been possible without the generous grant from the Warwick Postgraduate Fund. I am also grateful to the Turner Exhibition Fund, the Royal Historical Society and the Economic History Society for providing additional finances towards my research. My supervisor Mathew Thomson has been an invaluable source of support and guidance throughout, and I am exceedingly grateful that, as a historian of medicine, he willingly took on a doctoral student researching religious history. Additional thanks must go to Prof. Jim Beckford and Prof. Maria Luddy who gave me helpful feedback on initial drafts. The department of History at Warwick has proved a stimulating and rewarding environment in which to be based, and I am especially grateful to the department for giving me the opportunity to teach in my second year. As a London-based academic, the Institute of Historical Research has been an invaluable resource and support network, as well as an ideal forum for presenting my work. Particular thanks go to all the staff at the Centre for Contemporary British History, especially Prof. Pat Thane. Gratitude must also go to all members of the postgraduate seminar and the History Lab for making me feel part of a young dynamic scholarly community during these years, in particular Kate Bradley, James Lees, April Gallway and Helen McCarthy.

Outside the sphere of academia, I am indebted to Rogan, Bharji, 'Smugla' Brown, Alex and Kate Filby, Victoria Lawrence, Sarah Sanderson and Katherine Wilson for their humour and friendship, and for providing moments of much-needed distraction. Wynton Marsalis has also proved an enduring source of inspiration, not least in forcing me to consider why the story of Mrs Thatcher and the Church would be of interest to a trumpet player from New Orleans.

If a historian is wholly dependent on their archives, then this thesis is entirely indebted to the countless number of librarians and archivists who managed to unearth obscure and often uncatalogued material from their respective basements. Thanks must go to all the staff at the BBC Archives Centre, British Library, John Ryland's Library, Lambeth Palace Library and Manchester Central Library. There are a few archivists to whom I am especially grateful: Niall Cooper of Church Action on Poverty, Andrew Riley at Churchill College, Paul Webster at Liverpool City Archives and Meg Whittle at Liverpool Catholic Cathedral archives. The fact that this help was always coupled with a genuine interest in my work made these research trips even more enjoyable. I am also extremely grateful to those who gave me permission to access this material, including the Archbishop's Council, the Rt Revd Nigel McCulloch, Derek Worlock's Literary Executors and especially Lady Grace Sheppard, who not only granted me full access to the David Sheppard archive, but also proved a most stimulating and informative interviewee. Oral testimonies proved a vital part of the research process and I am incredibly grateful to the following who agreed to participate and for their patience and hospitality: Chris Beales, Ronald Bowlby, Richard O'Brien, Rev. Tom Butler, Prof. David Martin, Rev. Eric James, Tony Kilmister, Dr Rev. Edward Norman, Rev. David Jenkins and all those who took part in the *Faith in the City* witness seminar in 2006. I am also indebted to Veronica Morton, Robert Dale, Kathryn Dagless and James Moore for being excellent hosts on research trips in various parts of the UK. Special thanks must also go to John and Kerry Fanning at La Muse Writers' Retreat in France for providing an idyllic setting in which I was able to collate my ideas and mould my thesis into shape.

Steven Clarke has been a constant source of support, humour and encouragement, not least in offering to read the final draft, which he did with great proficiency and genuine interest. My greatest thanks must go to my parents. Their support and belief in me has been unfailing and I am forever in their debt – it is to them that this work is dedicated. While

immersed in the archives, I also encountered my own connections with this research, stumbling across former tutors, vicars, schools and parishes along the way, including my own great-cousin, the Rev. William Filby, the former Archdeacon of Horsham, Sussex. Unfortunately William did not get to see the final product, on which I'm sure he would have had much to say. In so many ways William embodied what the Church of England represented in the 1980s – and so it is to him that this work is also dedicated.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Abbreviations	7
List of Figures	9
List of Appendices	10
1. Introduction: God and Mrs Thatcher: the Interrelationship Between Religion and Politics in 1980s Britain	12
2. Public Anglicanism: the Role of the Established Church in a Secular Plural Nation	27
3. Statements of Faith: The Christian Response to Thatcherism	64
4. Mobilising the Moral Will of the Nation: Church, Parties and Voters	100
5. Private Faith and Public Doctrine: The Christian Roots of the New Right	136
6. Conviction Politician: Constructing the Thatcherite Theology	176
7. Epilogue: The Death of Protestant England and the Birth of Multi-Faith Britain: 1990s.	212
8. Conclusions: The State of Faith and the Faith of the State	232
Appendices	238
Bibliography	259

Abbreviations

BCC	British Council of Churches
BCP	Booth-Clibborn Papers, Manchester
BI	Borthwick Institute, York
BP	Blanch Papers, York
BSRP	Board for Social Responsibility Papers
CAA	Christian Action Archives
CAP	Church Action on Poverty
CAPA	Church Action on Poverty Archives
CATWU	Church Action with the Unemployed
CCA	Churchill College Archives, Cambridge
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Rearmament
COSPEC	Christian Organisations for Social, Political and Economic Change
COPEC	Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
CRRU	Community Race Relations Unit, British Council of Churches
CSM	Christian Socialist Movement
CUF	Church Urban Fund
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
ECUM	Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission
EVSSG	European Values Systems Study Group
FoL	National Festival of Light
GS	General Synod
HAB	John Habgood Papers, Borthwick Institute, University of York
HC	House of Commons debates
HL	House of Lords debates
HRO	Hampshire Record Office, Winchester
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IEAC	Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy Research
LCA	Liverpool City Archives
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library, London
MAF	Muslim Action Front
MCA	Metropolitan Cathedral Archives, Liverpool
MCB	Muslim Council of Britain
MCL	Manchester Central Library
MHF	Miners' Hardship Fund
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
NCB	National Coal Board
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
NUM	National Union of Miners
NVLA	National Viewers' and Listeners' Association
PBS	Prayer Book Society
POLL	Enoch Powell Archive, Cambridge
SAU	Social Affairs Unit
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SP	David Sheppard Papers, Liverpool City Archives

SPC	Social Policy Committee
SPUC	Society for the Protection of Unborn Children
TCBH	<i>Twentieth Century British History</i> Journal
THCR	Margaret Thatcher Archives, Churchill College, Cambridge
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UTU	Urban Theology Unit
UPAs	Urban Priority Areas
WCC	World Council of Churches
WP	Worlock Papers, Metropolitan Cathedral Archives, Liverpool
WRVS	Women's Royal Voluntary Service
YUL	York University Library

Figures

1. *Daily Express*, 13 November 1987

Appendices

Appendix I: The Changing Fortunes of Christianity in Britain, 1950-1985

- A. Membership of Christian Denominations, 1950-1985
- B. Numbers of Religious Marriages in England and Wales, 1970-1984
- C. Numbers of Anglican Churches and Clergy, 1950-1985
- D. Growth of other Christian Churches in the UK, 1970-1985

Appendix II: Christian Congregations in the 1980s

- A. Total Adult Churchgoers in England, 1975-1989

Appendix III: Implicit Christianity in the UK: Results of the EVSSG survey

Appendix IV: Partisan Group Affiliations within the General Synod

Appendix V. Recommendations of *Faith in the City*

Appendix VI: Resolutions and Votes Cast in the General Synod 1979-1990

- A. Political Matters
- B. Sexual Ethics
- C. Ecclesiastical Matters

Appendix VII: Party Political Affiliation in the General Synod and the wider Church

- A. The Laity
- B. The Clergy

Appendix VIII: Attitudes Towards Sexual Morality within the Church

Appendix IX: Anglican Conservative faction in the Commons, 1970-1993

- A. Votes on Church Measures in the Commons
- B. Prominent Anglican Conservatives in the Commons 1974-1993

Appendix X: Statistics on Multi-Faith Britain

- A. Non-Christian faith groups in Britain, 1970-1985
- B. 2001 Census Results

'Not odd, said God, I'd have you know,
It may seem easy down below
To keep the Bishops all in tow
Just propping up the Thatcher show
Up here, you see, there's hell to pay
She wants to tell ME what to say!
(Michael Foot MP, *The Times*, 1984)¹

¹ Michael Foot, *The Times*, 27 September 1984.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

God and Mrs Thatcher: the Interrelationship between Religion and Politics in 1980s Britain

'The Church, by its very existence, is a challenge to the state to consider its policies within a moral and spiritual dimension. And the state is a constant challenge to the Church to accept its proper responsibility for the secular world.' Stuart Blanch, Archbishop of York, 1981.¹

The historian Arthur Marwick in the opening pages of his comprehensive survey of postwar Britain set out what he considered to be the fundamental factors which had shaped the nation since World War Two.² Alongside the themes of liberalisation and decline, progress and false hope, Marwick positioned 'secular Anglicanism' as the prevailing ethos which had guaranteed the 'stability and unity of British society' throughout the tumultuous postwar decades.³ In Marwick's opinion, this tradition could be traced back to the birth of religious tolerance in the seventeenth century and was the main ethos which determined the 'broad political consensus of the mid-twentieth century.' Marwick described 'secular Anglicanism' as specifically an English mentality, derived from 'established Anglicanism' and defined by its tolerance, desire for consensus and distaste for extremities or fundamentalism of any kind. It could be restrictive and stagnant but ultimately created a nation that was stable and harmonious. In his view, it was this spirit which had ensured that England did not experience the religious fundamentalism or anti-clericalism that befell parts of mainland Europe, America and the Celtic fringes of the United Kingdom. And it was the 'continuing vigour' of this tradition in the second half of the twentieth century which conditioned Britain's 'peaceful accommodation' to the social and cultural challenges of the 1960s.⁴ Yet, according to Marwick, these values were to be dramatically overthrown by an 'abrasive' and ideologically minded Thatcher government resulting in a decade that was fraught with social fragmentation, political polarisation and cultural conflict.⁵

Whatever the merits or pitfalls of this historical interpretation, Marwick's particular assertion that 'secular Anglicanism' was effectively silenced during the Thatcher years, requires a reconsideration when one looks beyond the activities of the political parties and focuses on the institution which was the source of this tradition; namely the Church of

¹ York University Library, Borthwick Institute, York Diocesan Leaflet, July 1981, p.1.

² Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945* (London, 4th edition, 2003), pp.ix-xi.

³ Ibid, p.241. For a further elucidation of this theme, see pp.120-1, 218-9, 241, 392-3.

⁴ Ibid, p.218.

⁵ Marwick argues that this 'secular Anglican' ethos was only temporarily dislodged by Thatcherism and was restored, albeit with limited success, under the premiership of Tony Blair: Marwick, *British Society*, p.6.

England. For in this era of division and discord, the Church emerged as one of the chief defenders of the values of consensus, community and citizenship; the very essence of Marwick's 'secular Anglicanism'. From the pulpit to the picket line, from the Lords benches to the inner cities, the Anglican bishops persistently condemned the selfish individualism of enterprise culture, the destruction of the collective ethos within society and the rampant materialism being unleashed by free-market economics. Operating as a quasi-pressure group, the Church and its associated organisations made formal submissions to government, produced pamphlets, mobilised their constituency of parishioners and used their experience as leaders in the voluntary sector in a concerted effort to counter what they considered to be the unchristian dogmatics of Thatcherism. Defending the principles of the social democratic consensus that had reigned during the postwar years, Church leaders heralded the welfare state, redistributive taxation and government responsibility for the disadvantaged as the correct political manifestation of the Biblical doctrine of Christian fellowship. The 1980s was not the first time the Church had been critical of the state or offered its perspective on the politics of the day, yet the Thatcher years are significant because of the degree and energy with which this was done and because of the new secular context in which the Church was operating.

The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 had signified much more than the return of the Conservative party into power, for Mrs Thatcher's brand of right-wing Conservatism was the climax of a much broader 'conservative turn' in British political culture. It had grown out of a deep-rooted disillusionment with what some considered as the economic, political and moral degenerate state of the nation in the 1970s. The reconfigured Conservative party that emerged under Mrs Thatcher therefore proclaimed its mission to revitalise Britain by reinstating a market economy and reining in social 'permissiveness'. Motivated by a genuine belief in the religious basis of their politics and the moral failings of socialism, those on the right reasserted the link between Protestant and capitalist values and preached a theo-political vision based on personal freedom, responsibility and moral restraint. Unlike America, Christian Conservatism in Britain did not serve to galvanise the electorate, rather it operated as an important philosophical undercurrent, crucial in setting the tone and intellectual framing of what would become known as Thatcherism.⁶ Margaret Thatcher, herself raised in a strict Methodist household, led the way in articulating the

⁶ The author is conscious of the problems associated with the term 'Thatcherism', however in this thesis it serves as a convenient shorthand term for the political philosophy which lay behind the policies and outlook of the Conservative government in the 1980s. The 'New Right' is used here to describe the broader cultural, moral and philosophical movement that emerged from the mid-1970s onwards: see chapter 5 of this thesis for a full breakdown of the constituents within the New Right.

Christian justification for economic liberalism and refuting the Church's protestations about collective altruism and the Christianised welfare state.

This story therefore is one of a fraught and highly tense conflict between the Tory party and the once labelled 'Tory Party at Prayer', the Church of England. These two organisations, which historically had always been aligned, were involved in an intellectual and theological dispute centred on the Christian underpinnings of the nation's political values and its citizens. In this sense, the dialogue between the Conservative Party and the established Church was not simply a series of public spats encouraged by a scandal-hungry right-wing press. In fact, at the root of this tension were contrasting views about the political interpretation of the Christian message: did Christianity chiefly concern the individual or the collective?

To a certain extent, it is possible to divide this feud into two parts. In the first period, which lasted until the mid-1980s, the discussion took the form of a 'state of the nation' debate. Under the philosophical banner of liberty and individualism, Mrs Thatcher projected her faith in free-market economics, a scaled-down welfare state and restrictions on union power. The Church, on the other hand, called for a reconstituted Butskellite vision which would involve greater public investment to alleviate poverty, a corporatist industrial policy to ease tensions with the unions and a government-sponsored employment programme to curb unemployment. By 1987, however, the year of Mrs Thatcher's third election victory, in the wake of the defeat of the miners, the privatisation of key state-industries and the deregulation of the City, many had come to accept (including the Labour party), that the economic and political landscape had been completely reordered. But with it came a concern that a market economy was creating a selfish and materialistic society. Thus the latter period saw the Conservative party speak with even greater enthusiasm on the moral virtues of capitalism while at the same time the government channelled its efforts into installing a philanthropic and charitable ethic amongst the affluent members of society. The Church also switched its emphasis, criticising the amoral nature of the market, the failure of 'trickle-down' economics and proclaiming that a consumerist culture was corrupting the Christian values within society.

This impression of 'Maggie' engaged in an all out war with her 'Butskellite bishops', made front-page news at the time and, to an extent, is also the dominant portrayal in the limited academic literature on this subject. Henry Clark's 1993 work, *The Church under Thatcher* for example focuses on the activities of the Church's General Synod and its bureaucracy, detailing the method and meaning behind the Anglican public position against

the Thatcher government. In Clark's opinion, 'open acrimony' was inevitable between a Conservative party that had replaced its Anglican patrician roots for neo-liberal economics and a Church with a renewed appreciation of the social gospel.⁷ This assessment is shared by the historian Peter Catterall who has argued that the strained relations between Church and party during the eighties was a culmination of broader shifts during the twentieth century which had seen both organisations move in opposite directions. Catterall contends that the Church had distanced itself from the Conservative party, preferring instead to invest in the non-partisan social democratic postwar settlement.⁸ Political scientists Kenneth Medhurst and George Mosyer in contrast argue that the Church, influenced by developments in political theology, carved out a new independent ecclesiastical identity in the eighties. In their view, this shift from a conservative to a more radical outlook afforded the Church a more influential voice in the public realm in this period, despite it causing tensions with its laity.⁹

Two strands emerge from this body of literature: firstly, a tendency to stress the 'radicalisation' of the Church. While academics are divided on precisely how 'radical' Anglicanism was in the 1980s, most are agreed that a left-of-centre political position had become the reigning orthodoxy amongst the Anglican hierarchy. Secondly, scholars are inclined to view the Church's position on Thatcherism as simply a reiteration of Butskellism. This preference of Anglican leaders to reaffirm the social-democratic consensus has led one historian to conclude that the Church did not seek to enact change, only to voice dissent.¹⁰ Notably less attention has been paid to the New Right or Conservatism in these analyses, especially the Christian underpinnings of the New Right, the connections between traditionalist Anglicans and the Conservative party, or the religious protestations of Mrs Thatcher herself. These are glaring omissions, as these factors are crucial in explaining why there was such hostility between Church and the Conservative party in the 1980s. Graeme Smith's article, which seeks to construct Thatcher's 'theo-political identity', serves as a useful introduction to the Prime Minister's personal Christianity. Nevertheless, there is a need to locate what Smith calls Mrs Thatcher's 'Anglo-

⁷ Henry Clark, *The Church Under Thatcher* (London, 1993).

⁸ Peter Catterall, 'The Party and Religion' in A. Seldon & S. Ball (eds.), *The Conservative Century* (Oxford, 1994), pp.637-670.

⁹ Kenneth N. Medhurst & George H. Mosyer, *Church and Politics in a Secular Age* (Oxford, 1988).

¹⁰ Andrew Partington, *Church and State: The Contribution of the Church of England Bishops to the House of Lords during the Thatcher Years* (Milton Keynes, 2006), p.254.

Saxon Nonconformity' within the wider context of morality politics, conservative Anglicanism and Mrs Thatcher's conflict with the Church of England.¹¹

While the dispute between Church and state has received little attention from academics, two broader themes, Thatcherism and secularisation, have generated a wealth of literature and it is these two subjects that provide the historiographical framework for this study. The list of published studies on Mrs Thatcher and Thatcherism is exhaustive, and yet, key areas of debate can be ascertained. Firstly, some scholars have sought to portray Thatcherism as an all-encompassing ideological project, which linked social, economic and moral themes, permeating all levels of political and civic life. This is an interpretation which has been most forcefully put forward by Stuart Hall. Hall sees Thatcherism in Gramscian terms as amounting to a 'hegemonic shift' in British political culture.¹² Some scholars, notably J. Bulpitt and more recently Richard Vinen, have argued the opposite, claiming its anti-intellectual and pragmatic credentials.¹³ Connected to this, is a debate concerning the roots of Thatcherism and its place within the history of Conservative thought.¹⁴ Scholars are in dispute as to whether Thatcherism represented a complete break from the party's pragmatic tradition, or took its inspiration from either neo-Conservatism in America or Victorian Liberalism.¹⁵ Others such as Heather Nunn and Peter Riddell have tied their analysis much more closely to the personality and leadership of Mrs Thatcher. Nunn, for example, positions the Prime Minister as the personification of Thatcherite values and prejudices, while Riddell has traced the roots of Thatcherism back to the young Margaret's childhood in interwar Grantham.¹⁶

¹¹ Graeme Smith, 'Margaret Thatcher's Christian Faith: A Case Study in Political Theology', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol.35. No. 3, (June 2007), pp.233-257.

¹² Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques (eds.), *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, 1983) and *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London, 1988). Hall has since clarified his position stating that Thatcherism did not represent a new hegemony, but contained 'hegemonic' characteristics.

¹³ J. Bulpitt, 'The Discipline of the New Democracy: Mrs. Thatcher's Domestic Statecraft', *Political Studies*, Vol.34, No.1, (1986), pp.19-39; Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: the Politics of Thatcherism* (Basingstoke, 1994); Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Political and Social Upheavals of the 1980s* (London, 2009).

¹⁴ Shirley Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* (London, 1992); E.H.H. Green, *Thatcher* (London, 2006), pp.26-54 and *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2002), ch.8; Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism* (Cambridge, 2nd edition, 1990), preface; Mark Garnett & Lord Gilmour, 'Thatcherism and the Conservative Tradition' in M. Francis & I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds.), *The Conservatives and British Society 1880-1990* (Cardiff, 1996), pp.78-95; Brendan Evans, *Thatcherism and British Politics 1975-1999* (Stroud, 1999); David Willets, *Modern Conservatism* (Harmondsworth, 1992).

¹⁵ Desmond S. King, *The New Right: Politics, Markets and Citizenship* (Basingstoke, 1987); Andrew Adonis & Tim Hames (eds.), *A Conservative Revolution. The Thatcher-Reagan Decade in Perspective* (Manchester, 1994). There is also a historiographical debate as to whether there was a 'postwar' social democratic consensus and where Thatcherism stands in relation to it: Ben Pimlott, 'The Myth of Consensus' in L.M. Smith (ed.), *The Making of Britain. Echoes of Greatness* (London, 1988).

¹⁶ Heather Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy: The Political Culture of Gender and Nation* (London, 2002); Peter Riddell, *The Thatcher Era and its Legacy* (London, 2nd edition, 1991).

This thesis does not aim to refute but to build on this existing literature by examining 1980s Conservatism through the previously unexplored lens of religion. It does not contend that Christianity was the single most important ingredient in Thatcherism, but argues that a particular individualistic Christianity was one of the defining factors which shaped it and differentiated it from traditional Tory Anglicanism. Much has been written about the morality politics of Thatcherism, with historians and commentators divided on the extent to which the government displayed authoritarian or libertarian tendencies on matters of individual morality.¹⁷ It is proposed here, however, that the ‘Victorian values’ rhetoric of Thatcherism is best understood when located in its religious as well as its political context, especially in light of Mrs Thatcher’s on-going dispute with the Church. Moreover, by exploring the religious roots of the New Right and the Prime Minister, this thesis will add to an understanding of the philosophical heritage and make-up of Thatcherism and Mrs Thatcher’s own unique contribution to it.

In focusing on the interrelationship between religion and politics in the modern era, this study also seeks to engage with the wealth of literature on the sociology of religion. This area of research has been largely framed around the secularisation thesis, that is, in the succinct words of sociologist Bryan Wilson, the ‘process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions, lose social significance’.¹⁸ Or put another way, that the forces of modernity (economic, cultural and political) gradually erode spiritual belief, which result in the privatisation of religion and its disconnection from public life and politics. This theory is one that has been amply applied to the modern history of Britain. Up until recently, sociologists and historians had rooted the start of this secularising course firmly in the nineteenth century, in the context of the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment. Recent work by Callum Brown and Hugh McLeod however has sought to re-locate Britain’s ‘secularisation moment’ to the social and cultural revolution of the 1960s. While Brown and McLeod deploy different methodologies and contrasting emphases, both are of the view that this period saw new identities and priorities replace an adherence to

¹⁷ Martin Durham, *Sex and Politics: The Family and Morality in the Thatcher Years* (Basingstoke, 1991); Andrew Holden, *Makers and Manners: Politics and Morality in Post-War Britain* (London, 2004).

¹⁸ Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (London, 1966), p.xiv. See also Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, 1967). For revisions on this thesis, see Peter L. Berger (eds.), *The Desecularisation of the World; Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, 1999); Linda Woodhead, Paul Heelas & David Martin (eds.), *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion* (London, 2001); David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularisation* (Oxford, 1978) and *On Secularisation: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, 2005); Steve Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernisation: Sociologists and Historians debate the Secularisation Thesis* (Oxford, 1992).

Christianity, whereby the generational transference of faith was irretrievably broken.¹⁹ There is thus an emerging academic consensus that the 1960s is the important turning point in the religious history of the nation.²⁰ Most are agreed that the rise of pluralism, consumerism and individualism combined with the liberalisation of morality and the growing responsibilities of state, triggered a sharp collapse of faith amongst the populace and a loss of influence for the churches.²¹ That there was a dramatic drop in churchgoing is indisputable, however, one question that this thesis poses is what aspects of Britain's religious culture remained in public political realm, and why?²² Sociologist Grace Davie has revealed through an analysis of public attitude surveys and other evidence, the continual prevalence of an implicit Christian faith amongst the British people. Davie has labelled this 'believing without belonging'; a diffuse Christian belief which may not have reflected itself in churchgoing, but was evidence of the continual prevalence of Christian values within society. Drawing on Davie's example, this thesis will apply the same approach for the politics of the 1980s, in effect to tease out the 'implicit' Christianity which bubbled under the surface of British public life and to ascertain precisely how religion featured in the politics of the day.²³

Sociologists and historians of modern religion in Britain have quite rightly focused on the changing fortunes of Christianity within popular culture and society. This has meant, however, that scholars have paid less attention to the role of institutional churches within the realm of politics and public debate. It is assumed that the decline of the Church in society rendered its public role meaningless and irrelevant. Work by Matthew Grimley and others has sought to rectify this gap in the literature, showing the abiding influence of the Church in the political life of the nation. Grimley's assessment on liberal Anglican theories of state in the interwar period has been matched by Dianne Kirby's work on the

¹⁹ Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (Abingdon, 2001) and *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2006). Callum Brown focuses on the role of women as central agents in this process while Hugh McLeod, on the other hand, offers a comparative survey across Europe analysing how the social and economic upheavals of the 1960s overturned religious faith within society: Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007).

²⁰ See Gerald Parsons, 'How the Times they were a-changing; Exploring the Context of Religious Transformation in Britain in the 1960s' in John Wolffe (ed.), *Religion in History: Conflict, Conversion and Coexistence* (Manchester, 2004), pp.161-189; Callum G. Brown, 'The Secularisation Decade: What the 1960s have done to the Study of Religious History' in Hugh McLeod & Werner Ustorf (eds.), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe* (Cambridge, 2003), pp.29-46.

²¹ On the impact of the welfare state on the churches, see Frank Prochaska, *The Disinherited Spirit. Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2006).

²² See Appendix I for statistics relating to the decline of Christianity in the post-war period.

²³ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, 1994).

contribution of the Anglican leaders in the diplomatic politics of the Cold War.²⁴ Taking a long-view approach, G.I.T. Machin has traced this process over the course of the twentieth century, revealing how the churches' political involvement increased as their spiritual and moral influence declined.²⁵ All of this scholarly work pertains to the way in which the Church has influenced politics, but also how the Church itself has been shaped by the political developments of the twentieth century. One of the key historiographical arguments centres on the effectiveness and importance of this spiritual contribution. While Grimley cites interwar liberal Anglicanism as illustrative of a positive interaction between Church and society, other scholars have proposed that the Church's growing involvement in politics was reflective of an institution struggling to maintain influence in an increasingly secularised nation. Sociologist Steve Bruce, for example, concurs that, although the Church has adopted a more independent and critical role in the political domain, this 'freedom has been brought at the price of the government listening to them'.²⁶ The ecclesiastical historian Edward Norman, on the other hand, has judged that the Church of England's engagement with secular ideas and spheres came at the cost of its spiritual integrity. Norman contends that the Church hierarchy adopted the ideas, language and outlook of the secular liberal elite in order to maintain influence in less religious times.²⁷ One of the key questions examined here is how, if at all, the Church's contribution to politics in the 1980s was important and whether the dialogue between Church and the state was reflective of what Norman has deemed the 'secularisation' of Christianity, or was, in fact, an indication of the implicit religiosity within the public domain.

Some sociologists have aimed at establishing an analytical framework for the interrelationship between religion and politics in a secular age. Jose Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* starts from the basis that the late-twentieth century saw the re-emergence of a religious involvement in political movements on both left and right of the

²⁴ Dianne Kirby (ed.), *Church, State and Propaganda: A Political Study of Archbishop Cyril Foster Garbett* (Hull, 1999); Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of State between the Wars* (Oxford, 2004); Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity* (London, 4th edition, 2001); Malcolm Brown & Paul H. Ballard, *The Church and Economic Life. A Documentary Study: 1945 to the Present* (Peterborough, 2006); Jane Garnett, Matthew Grimley & Alana Harris (eds.), *Redefining Christian Britain: Post 1945 Perspectives* (London, 2007).

²⁵ G.I.T. Machin, *Church and Social Issues in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998).

²⁶ Steve Bruce, *Religion in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1995), p.31.

²⁷ Edward Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970: A Historical Survey* (Oxford, 1977); Norman, 'Church and State since 1800' in Sheridan Gilley & W.J. Sheils (eds.), *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford, 1994). Norman considers that 'The clergy have tended to reflect the shifts of emphasis and the major preoccupations of the secular intelligentsia, and it has been these, and not any residual constitutional links or public functions, which have allowed them to suppose that the Church retains a significant place in the evolution of opinion': Norman, 'Church and State since 1800', p.289.

ideological spectrum.²⁸ Casanova groups together the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Solidarity movement in Poland, the rise of Protestant fundamentalism in America and the prominence of Catholicism in Nicaragua as illustrative of this world-wide trend. In his attempt to explain this phenomenon, Casanova shows how religious bodies, in different contexts and through varied means, have shed their former associations with power and re-entered the public sphere as initiators of political change. Faith organisations, Casanova explains, were now occupying the 'discursive space' of civil society and offering a moral critique of power that was legitimate, desirable and justified. Building on Casanova's ideas, David Herbert, sees the shift in terms of a reformulation of religion's public role in the secular plural age, whereby faith is no longer seen as reactionary, conservative or beholden to temporal power, but on the side of modernity, proselytising liberal values in the interests of the whole of society. According to Herbert, this has resulted in religious beliefs and rights becoming politicised and political matters such as economics being judged within a religious prism.²⁹ Casanova and Herbert's analyses of these global developments provide a comparative framework, however clearly the fact that the Church of England retained its links with the state inevitably means that it does not fully adhere to these conclusions. Quite how and why the Church of England both contradicts and complements this theory will be fleshed out in this thesis.

This study does not seek to refute the claim that Britain had gone through a significant 'secularising' experience in the second half of the twentieth century rather it aims for a more nuanced understanding of these changes by examining the complexities and extent of this process in the political arena. Nor does it wish to exaggerate the place of religion within the politics of the 1980s, but rather to shed new light on the importance of Christian doctrine and the established Church to political thought and action in late-twentieth century Britain. In this sense, the aim is to unravel, what George Moyser has called the 'latent religious presence at the heart of English society and politics'.³⁰

As will be demonstrated, the Church of England, and its bishops in particular, were a dynamic presence on the public stage to the extent that some labelled the Church as 'the unofficial opposition' to the Thatcher government. A key factor as to why the Church's intervention in this period is significant (and indeed worthy of analysis) was that it came at a

²⁸ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1992). Casanova does not address Britain in his analysis.

²⁹ David Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World* (Aldershot, 2003).

³⁰ George Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today: Essays on the Role of the Church of England in Contemporary Politics* (Edinburgh, 1985), p.18.

time when the Labour party was crippled by internal conflict, the press was largely pro-Conservative and when the resistance from the trade unions and local councils was to be effectively crushed by the government. In some historical accounts, the Church is positioned alongside other members of the ‘wet liberal Establishment’, which were also against the Thatcherite tide, such as the BBC, universities and the arts fraternity.³¹ This thesis however, singles the Church of England out, arguing that it represents a unique case, because of the extent of its organisational structure, its position as the established Church and its moral credibility as a non-partisan voice in the community and on the national stage. As one commentator has recognised, the Church has an enviable set of resources at its disposal:

It has the things which other charities and lobbying groups value and work to obtain: a brand name which is instinctively recognised; royal patronage; access to opinion-formers, decision makers and government; a professional staff at Church House and Lambeth Palace – many of whom come from the ranks of the civil service, who understand the business of government; a network of local organisations and an army of volunteers willing to do the drudgery work.³²

The Church of England was not the only religious body to speak out against the Thatcher government; the Roman Catholic Church, the Nonconformist churches and ecumenical bodies from all parts of the Kingdom were also pro-active in this regard.³³ Yet it is the contention here that the Church of England merits special attention as its historic connection to the Tory party meant that its opposition posed a distinct challenge to Conservative party identity, which the other churches did not.³⁴ Indeed, as we shall see, the conflict was a highly emotive and fraught one, which involved accusations of betrayal on

³¹ Hugo Young, *One of Us: a Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1989); John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: The Iron Lady Vol. II* (London, 2004).

³² D. Rogers, *Politics, Prayer and Parliament* (London, 2000), p.142.

³³ The Church of Scotland was especially forthright, in part because in this pre-devolved era the Kirk operated as one of the leading spokespersons for Scottish interests. The Church of Scotland, however, will not be a focus here because the Kirk’s outlook was very much connected to the issue of Scottish nationalism and stemmed from a different religious heritage. Reference will be made to some Scottish theologians and publications and to Mrs Thatcher’s infamous sermon to the Kirk in 1988. The churches in Northern Ireland will also not be addressed, for the interrelationship between religion and politics operated on a completely different dynamic in the province not least because its community remained sharply divided by sectarian lines. I have found little evidence that the disestablished Church in Wales contributed to the debate on the national platform, although it obviously operated as an important organisation at a local and regional level. The emphasis in this study is specifically on England, rather than Britain, partly because it focuses on the Church of England, but also because, as we shall see, so much of the dialogue between the Church and State concerned contrasting visions of Englishness (rather than Britishness) and its relationship to Christian values.

³⁴ The term ‘Church’ in this thesis refers exclusively to the Church of England while the term ‘churches’ alludes to the main Christian denominations in Britain.

both sides. Moreover, it was the Church of England which received the greatest attention from politicians (not simply Conservative MPs) and the media (not just confined to the broadsheet press). This was partly reflective of the fact that, paradoxically, in this age of religious decline and ecumenicalism, the Church of England's position as the chief spiritual representative in Britain had been reinforced rather than undermined.

In examining the contribution of theology to political discourse, the aim here is not to make wide-ranging assertions about the religious motivations of the electorate; as historians and sociologists have correctly assessed, faith had long since ceased to be a determining factor at the ballot box. Nevertheless, public opinion is important in our story: in the first instance because both Conservatives and the Church laid claim to the underlying Christian ethos within society and therefore imprinted specific motivations and priorities onto the electorate. Secondly, because of the important constituency of Anglican Conservative voters who felt torn between their Church and their party during this period. This aside, the central aim of this study is to show how Christianity underpinned the political discourse of the ruling elite rather than determined the political choices of the electorate. It will show how Mrs Thatcher's religious protestations were central to her image and how theological doctrine provided a framework for her political philosophy. Moreover, it will explain how traditional Christianity was central to the make-up of New Right and how tensions between the Conservative party and the Church of England closely paralleled the internal conflict within Anglicanism between traditionalists and liberals. A major theme, therefore, will be the theological and personal ties between religious and political conservatism in this period. A full explanation of the spilt within Anglicanism is beyond this thesis, yet the division between traditionalist and liberal Anglicans will be explained in terms of where it crossed over into the political sphere and how it impacted on the relationship between the Church and government.

If the theological dispute within Anglicanism provides the backdrop, then the focus of this study is the articulation of political values by clergymen and Conservatives. The Church extolled the idea of a moral community promoted by an altruistic egalitarian welfare system and a harmonious industrial policy which bound voters, workers and legislators together around the Christian ideal of fellowship. Mrs Thatcher and her colleagues in contrast proclaimed individualism and liberty as the essence of the Christian faith and central to the nation's ethos, stressing the benefit that these Judeo-Christian values brought to the whole of society. Disagreements about policy between the Church and government, be they taxation levels or youth employment schemes, therefore tended to escalate into a

debate about Christian doctrine and its relationship to political values; was the nation's altruism best displayed through mandatory taxation or voluntary donations to charity for example? Even though both Church and government advanced contrasting views on the relationship between the individual and state, there was a shared underlying assumption that political values were rooted in Christianity and that Britain remained, in essence, a Christian nation. For this reason, this thesis addresses the broader theme of the nation's religious identity in a secular plural age and analyses how the concept of a 'Christian nation' operated and was defended in this period. It will also trace how this notion was eventually undermined, not by greater secularism but by religious pluralism, as both the Church and the political elite gradually came to recognise the multi-faith nature of British society.

Recent developments in political history writing have seen historians becoming increasingly concerned with what is broadly defined as 'political culture'; a desire to show how 'high politics' interacts with 'popular culture' by weaving together content, political communication methods and its reception into an all intertwining analysis. Susan Pederson has explained how historians who previously confined their analysis to 'high politics' have recently embraced a much broader vision of what constitutes 'the political'.³⁵ This thesis focuses on political dialogue on the national stage, yet it also seeks to show how this debate played out at a local level, particularly how the Church disseminated its message to the parishes. Nonetheless, this thesis primarily concerns itself with political thought and therefore, its approach, to borrow historian Jonathan Parry's phrase, is to outline the 'intellectual setting in which political activity took place'.³⁶ In this case, to assess how theological ideas about society and politics were discussed and interpreted and acted upon by the Church and government. The emphasis is on reconstructing what conservative historian Maurice Cowling termed 'public doctrine', in his monumental work *Religion and Public Doctrine*.³⁷ That is, 'the assumptions that constitute the framework within which teaching, writing and public action are conducted'.³⁸ Cowling's work may be highly disputable, but it is important for the way in which it has inspired an interest in the currency

³⁵ Susan Pedersen, 'What is Political History Now?' in David Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp.36-56.

³⁶ Jonathan Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1986), p.3, quoted in Pedersen, 'What is Political History Now?', p.42.

³⁷ Maurice Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England: Vol.I* (Cambridge, 1980); *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England: Vol.II Assaults* (Cambridge, 1985); *Religion and Public Doctrine: Vol. III Accommodations* (Cambridge, 2001).

³⁸ Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine, Vol.I*, p.xi.

and content of 'public doctrine' in the political culture of the nation.³⁹ This thesis therefore will show how both the Church and the Conservative government articulated separate and conflicting 'public doctrines', analysing the religious tone and substance of these divergent ideologies and showing how both tapped into prevailing interests, fears and prejudices. In this way, this thesis does not present Thatcherism as an unopposed orthodoxy, but one which experienced an important philosophical challenge from the Church of England.

As this study involves the intellectual conversation between Conservatism and Anglicanism in the 1980s, it makes use of a whole host of published material and public statements, including religious tracts, sermons, political speeches, Hansard and Synod debates as well as the secular and religious press, television and radio. It also draws upon previously unused private and personal archives of Conservative MPs (including Mrs Thatcher), individual bishops' papers, those of the central Church bureaucracy and associated Christian organisations and pressure groups.⁴⁰ Thus the originality of this study lies in the private and public source material that the author has managed to collate on this subject.

The media was crucial in fostering the dialogue between Church and state, yet there is also a need to apply caution here for the press, particularly its right-wing contingents, tended to engage in a mixture of exaggeration, simplification and hyperbole when reporting these matters. There is also the additional problem of viewing public pronouncements as evidence of actual beliefs, especially with the input of speechwriters. Effort will therefore be made to show whether these public statements were engineered for political purposes or were the genuine convictions of those preaching them, especially in regards to Margaret Thatcher. This is in addition to the problem of viewing utterances of figures such as the Prime Minister or the Archbishop of Canterbury as representative of respectively the Conservative party or the Church of England. Therefore, where possible, this analysis has been reinforced with private papers in order to highlight any discrepancies and differences between individual and organisational/institutional positions.

The analysis centres on the Church of England and the Conservative party, although reference will be made to the other political parties and denominations for essential counter points and context. Particular attention is given over to the ideological parallels between the newly-formed Social Democratic Party and the Church of England

³⁹ Michael Bentley (ed.), *Public and Private Doctrine: Essays in British History Presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge, 1993), esp. Philip Williamson, 'The Doctrinal Politics of Stanley Baldwin', pp.181-209.

⁴⁰ A full list of archives is given in the bibliography of this thesis.

and on the religious side, the unique ecumenical partnership between the Catholic Archbishop Derek Worlock and the Anglican Bishop David Sheppard in Liverpool. The thesis takes a broadly thematic approach while maintaining a narrative form, detailing for example the important events and transitions that took place during this momentous decade such as the miners' strike, the urban riots and the government's dispute with the Militant Council in Liverpool.⁴¹ In terms of structure, this thesis is divided into two halves. The first part (chapters 2-4) explores the Church's response to Thatcherism, the second section (chapters 5 and 6) deals with the New Right's critique of Anglicanism and the Christian basis of Thatcherism. As has already been alluded to, sociologists and historians of religion have assumed that the decline in religious belief precipitated a weakening of the Church's public position, chapter two, therefore, addresses this issue by focusing on how the Church of England reconfigured its role within this new secular context. Centred on the question of how the Church legitimised its role as a critic of government, it will show how Church leaders justified this political intervention through the Church's role in civil society and as a purveyor of Christian values. Having explored the nature of the Church's authority in the political arena, chapter three looks at how the Church, as an agency of political power, probed and challenged the moral basis of Thatcherism in respect to the government's policies on poverty, welfare, industry and wealth. Chapter four seeks to assess the Church's contribution; positioning the Church's stance within the context of partisan politics of the 1980s, and assessing the meaning and significance of the Church's intervention in this polarised era.

In the second part of the thesis, the emphasis switches from the Church to the New Right. Chapter five explores the intellectual and religious roots of the 'conservative turn' in political culture, examining how Christianity and in particular a dissatisfaction with a liberal politicised Anglicanism was a factor which united the various facets of the New Right including Tory intellectuals, traditionalist Anglicans, economic liberals, the moral lobby and the Conservative party. It explores how Anglican Conservatives, of various guises, reasserted the individualist nature of faith and the traditional liturgical, moral and ecclesiastical basis of Anglicanism. It is the doctrinal politics of the Prime Minister herself that is considered in chapter six. Tracing her faith back to her Methodist upbringing in

⁴¹ The analytical focus here is on the Church's involvement in domestic affairs, chiefly social, moral and economic issues. During this period the Church was also pro-active in 'foreign affairs', particularly involving debates about nuclear rearmament and the developing world. These subjects are only tentatively dealt with here partly because they addressed broader themes about international ethics and decolonisation but also because these debates dated back to the 1950s and were not unique to the 1980s or explicitly connected to the Church's refutation of Thatcherism.

interwar Grantham, this section follows Mrs Thatcher's own spiritual journey, revealing how, by the late 1970s, in the climate of moral 'permissiveness' and political disillusionment, Mrs Thatcher rediscovered the Nonconformity of her youth. Secondly, it will look in extensive depth at the religious understanding conveyed in her speeches, revealing how she harnessed theological concepts such as the Protestant work ethic, original sin and man's individual relationship to God and linked these to the political doctrines of individualism, liberty and self-restraint.

The epilogue surveys developments in the immediate aftermath of the Thatcher decade, demonstrating how, once Mrs Thatcher had left office, the Church retreated from the public political stage and became more and more immersed in ecclesiastical affairs, chiefly the ordination of women debate. Secondly, it shows how a female priesthood proved to be the deal-breaker for many Anglican Tories, who subsequently left the Church of England; a symbolic moment, which heralded the final spilt between Conservatism and Anglicanism. Finally, it traces how the notion of a 'Christian nation' on which the dialogue between the Church and state had been predicated, was uprooted and ultimately became redundant as *The Satanic Verses* controversy triggered a slow but definite recalibration of the nation's religious identity, from a Christian to a multi-faith nation.

CHAPTER II

Public Anglicanism: the Role of the Established Church in a Secular Plural Nation

'The creed of the English is that there is no God and that it is wise to pray to Him from time to time.'
Alasdair MacIntyre, 1963.¹

'The Church is the Church of England, not just the Church of those who formally belong to it.'
Stuart Blanch, Archbishop of York, 1983.²

'It is Christianity rather than one church which is established in Britain.'
Rev. Alan Webster, 1985.³

On a summer afternoon in 1982, the Archbishop of Canterbury, standing in the pulpit of St Paul's Cathedral, the 'parish of the Empire', launched into his sermon for the thanksgiving service for the Falkland Islands conflict. The quick and decisive victory over the Argentinians earlier that year had been heralded as a reversal in the nation's fortunes, the moment when Britain, in Mrs Thatcher's words, 'ceased to be a nation in retreat'.⁴ The sense of national revival was reinforced with images of patriotic crowds waving their Union Jacks at Portsmouth dock welcoming home the Task Force. In the run up to the war, the Anglican bishops had supported the British government's right to defend the Islands. However, the whole episode had proved extremely problematic for the Church coinciding as it did with Pope John Paul's tour of Britain.⁵ The Pontiff's visit, the first by a reigning Pope since the Reformation, was supposed to represent the culmination of closer relations between Canterbury and Rome however, the outbreak of war between Britain and a Catholic country threatened to completely overshadow the entire event.⁶ It was against this backdrop that Runcie was called upon to speak on behalf of the nation at the thanksgiving service. Would the leading Primate of the established Church seek to embrace the jubilant

¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, 'God and the Theologians', *Encounter*, Vol.21, 3 September 1963, p.10.

² *Yorkshire Evening Press*, July 1983. A copy is deposited in the Stuart Blanch papers, York University Library, Borthwick Institute, Blanch Papers, BP1/BLA/1, 1983 sermons. No specific date locatable on newspaper clipping.

³ Alan Webster, 'Putting Christianity first', *The Times*, 16 November 1985.

⁴ Mrs Thatcher first made this statement in a speech in Cheltenham on 3 July 1982. It is reprinted in her memoirs: Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London, 1993), p.235.

⁵ Not all Anglican clergy supported the invasion. John Robinson, the retired Bishop of Woolwich, for example, publicly opposed the war and attacked Christian leaders for sanctioning the invasion. Christian denominations were also divided. The Roman Catholic Cardinal, Basil Hume offered his support to the government, while the British Council of Churches, Methodist Church and the Baptist Union all advocated a settlement through the UN.

⁶ It was reported that the Vatican had wanted to postpone the visit because of the crisis. It was eventually agreed that the Prime Minister would not meet the Pope and that the British Government would not be involved in anyway. On the day that John Paul arrived in the UK, the Argentinian army had already surrendered at Goose Green in the Falklands.

and celebratory mood and reunite the holy trinity of patriotism, imperialism and Christianity?

‘War’, the Archbishop boldly declared, was ‘a sign of human failure.’ Articulating a message of peace and reconciliation, Runcie reprimanded against the false idol of nationalism and while not singling anyone out, condemned those who had displayed a distasteful enthusiasm for war.⁷ Indeed, as an officer in the Scots Guards in the Second World War and bearer of the Military Cross, the Archbishop knew the realities of combat more than most.⁸ Runcie also used the opportunity to denounce the immorality of the international arms trade and nuclear weaponry, and controversially closed the service by leading the congregation in prayers for both the British and Argentinian casualties of war.⁹

Returning to the Commons terrace after the service, Denis Thatcher was reported to have remarked to one Conservative MP, ‘the boss is livid’ and this sense of outrage from Conservative quarters also filled the pages of the right-wing press the next day. Conservative MP Julian Amery had judged that the ceremony was typical of the ‘pacifist, liberal, wet Establishment’ which was out of touch with popular opinion and the government.¹⁰ There was nothing that was particularly radical in Runcie’s sermon, the Church had long been extolling such ideas on nuclear rearmament and peace and reconciliation, yet the incident was important for the way it marked the Church of England out as fundamentally in conflict with the ethos and direction of the Conservative government. The war that cemented Mrs Thatcher’s position as Prime Minister also cemented the Church of England’s reputation as one of the leading opponents of the Conservative administration. According to Robert Runcie, from that moment on, the Church became an ‘acceptable target’ for the right-wing press and Thatcherites, who would consistently dismiss Anglican leaders for their ‘wet’ thinking and left-leaning pretensions.¹¹

That summer of 1982 witnessed another important event which would also mark the Church out as an important political voice in the nation: the formation of the

⁷ Runcie later explained that he had felt compelled to speak out against those Tory ‘armchair warriors’ who had never seen conflict yet were always convinced that war was the only option: *The Canterbury Tales* (Channel 4, 1996).

⁸ Viscount William Whitelaw, then Home Secretary, had actually been Runcie’s commanding officer in the Scots Guards. See Whitelaw’s defence of the Falkland’s sermon: David L. Edwards, (ed.), *Robert Runcie; A Portrait by his Friends* (London, 1990), pp.6-8.

⁹ *The Times*, 27 July 1982.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, The government obviously felt that the service had been an inadequate celebration and a much more triumphant victory parade through the City of London was organised in October, two months after the St Paul’s service.

¹¹ *The Purple, the Blue and the Red, Episode I: Marching As to War* (BBC, Radio 4, 1996), transcript deposited in the Lambeth Palace Library, p.4.

Archbishop's report into urban poverty.¹² The inner city riots the previous year had prompted Runcie to gather together a committee of Christian and lay experts to examine the role of the Church and to put forward proposals for government and other secular agencies in order to alleviate social deprivation. *Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation*, as it became known, was finally published three years later in December 1985, and would prove to be one of the most important and illuminating political documents of the 1980s.¹³ Moreover, its moral condemnation of Thatcherism and defence of the welfare state firmly positioned the Church against the neo-Conservative tide.

These two events – Runcie's Falkland's sermon and the establishment of the *Faith in the City* commission – reflected the priorities of the Anglican hierarchy during the 1980s: a desire to speak on behalf of the poor, rather than the victorious; and a belief that its mission lay in challenging, rather than legitimising, government action whether in the ceremonial or political spheres. The origins, rationale and method of this increasingly prominent and politicised role of the Church in a secular public domain will be the subject of this chapter. The first section will provide the historical context to this study, tracing the development of Anglicanism from the nineteenth century and the important theological and political split between liberals and traditionalists that emerged within the Church from the 1960s. The second section will focus on those institutions, organisations and personalities which made up the Anglican opposition to Thatcherism: what has been labelled here as 'the channels of priestly pressure'. The remainder of the chapter will examine how the Church legitimised its public position in a secular plural nation, pointing to how clergymen conceptualised the role of the established Church as one not tied to temporal power, but as a crucial agent in civil society and an articulator of latent Christian values which they argued continued to bind the nation together.

I. Historical Context: Developments within Anglicanism

The Church of England since its foundation has always been a 'broad Church' in doctrinal terms, comprising of what has sometimes felt like an 'unholy' alliance among evangelicals, liberals and high-Anglicans. The nineteenth century however, saw it gradually develop into a 'broad Church' politically, as Anglicans became increasingly divided along partisan lines. The evangelical revival which had its roots in the eighteenth century had given birth to a

¹² Liverpool City Archives, Sheppard Papers, Publications Box 2, *Faith in the City* file, correspondence between Eric James and David Sheppard, 1982.

¹³ *Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas* (London, 1985).

generation of committed social reformers and philanthropists who channelled their faith and zeal into alleviating the social distress caused by industrialisation. At the same time, however, evangelical notions of personal salvation and the moral individual were crucial in providing the spiritual basis for *laissez faire* capitalism.¹⁴ Meanwhile the gradual assimilation and acceptance of Nonconformist and Catholic churches gently eroded (but did not destroy) Anglicanism's privileged place in the realm. Nepotism and well-endowed benefices guaranteed the Anglican clergy's continual place as part of the ruling elite, while the perennial threat of disestablishment also ensured that the Anglican leadership remained closely tied to its protective ally; the Conservative party. A significant problem, however, was the Church's slow and inadequate response to the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, especially with the Nonconformist and Catholic churches proving adept at providing a spiritual focus for the new urbanised working class. As the social effects of industrialisation took their toll, however, there emerged a (predominantly anglo-catholic) Christian socialist movement which culminated in the formation of the Christian Social Union in 1889. Its emphasis was on Christian brotherhood and its ethos was decidedly paternalistic, with its membership rarely extending beyond the confines of the middle-class clergy. This fact has led one historian to conclude that the movement was more effective in 'interesting Christians in socialism than socialists in Christianity.'¹⁵

The new century would see Christian socialism parallel its secular counterpart in attaining greater respectability and support within the Church. In the aftermath of the First World War, an Anglican committee, aided by a young R.H. Tawney, produced a report entitled *Christianity and Industrial Problems*, which was judged by the then Regius Professor of Oxford to be projecting a message that 'state socialism is an integral part of Christian teaching.'¹⁶ If the 1918 report was a sign that the Church hierarchy had embraced socialist ideas, then the unenthusiastic response it received in some quarters points to the fact that there was a clear division between individualism and collectivism within the pews. In the interwar years the Church achieved greater autonomy from Parliament with the establishment of its own assembly, yet Westminster's subsequent rejection of the revised Prayer Book in 1927-8 was an indication that MPs (by and large Conservatives) were still prepared to hold the Church to account on ecclesiastical matters. The establishment in 1924

¹⁴ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988); Norman, *Church and Society*, chs. 2-5; G.I.T Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1832 to 1868* (Oxford, 1977) and *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869-1921* (Oxford, 1987).

¹⁵ Sheridan Gilley, 'The Church of England in the Nineteenth Century', in Sheridan Gilley & W.J. Sheils (eds.), *A History of Religion in Britain*, p.304.

¹⁶ Quoted in Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869-1921*, pp.15-6.

of the Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC) – an interdenominational gathering dealing with issues as wide-ranging as housing, education, industry, crime, property and contraception – was both a testimony to closer relations between denominations and the central place accorded to social reform by the churches.¹⁷ Inspired by the New Liberalism of the age and the spirit of ecumenicalism, William Temple and other prominent Christians increasingly added their theological weight to contemporary debates about unemployment, poverty and housing, and together constructed a forceful Christian case for government interventionism rooted in a harmonious concept of a Christian citizenry and a benevolent state.¹⁸ These ideas would eventually form the foundations of the postwar welfare settlement, with Archbishop William Temple, who had set out his Christian vision of government in *Christianity and Social Order*, designated the moral architect of this New Jerusalem.¹⁹ Commenting on the crucial contribution of liberal Anglicanism to postwar reconstruction, theologian Duncan Forrester has put it simply: ‘Christianity provided the philosophy that the welfare state required.’²⁰ R.H. Tawney, whose writings explored the incompatibility of Protestant and capitalist values and proposed the Christian case for equality, stands alongside William Temple as a pivotal figure in the successful reformulation of Christianity around progressive values in the first half of the twentieth century.²¹

The social and cultural upheavals of the 1960s – with the arrival of affluence, the end of deference, the rise of identity politics and a relaxation of social mores – had ramifications for the whole of Christendom, especially Britain. First and foremost, these years saw a dramatic decline in churchgoing, Christian rituals and religious forms of socialisation. Denominational adherence ceased to be a social convention or measure of respectability, while Christian notions of the self and expectations of godly conduct (especially for women) gradually eroded within the liberalised moral climate.²² Nonconformist and Anglican numbers gradually dwindled, and even though Roman

¹⁷ Norman, *Church and Society*, chs.6-8; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*; Machin, *Churches and Social Issues*; Grimley, *Citizenship*.

¹⁸ Grimley, *Citizenship*; Duncan B. Forrester, *Christianity and the Future of Welfare* (London, 1985), ch. 4.

¹⁹ William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (London, 1942).

²⁰ Forrester, *Christianity and the Future of Welfare*, p.43. Forrester argues that this contribution was not exclusively Anglican, citing the involvement of all the Christian denominations to the formation of the welfare state, pp.38-41.

²¹ R. H. Tawney’s three major works were *The Acquisitive Society* (London, 1920), *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (London, 1926) and *Equality* (London, 1931). He was a member of the Church of England Committee which produced *Christianity and Industrial Problems* (1918) and was involved in the COPEC conference in 1924: Anthony Wright, *R. H. Tawney* (Manchester, 1987).

²² Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, ch.8.

Catholic congregations actually increased during the 1960s, Catholicism eventually followed suit, experiencing a sharp drop in attendance the following decade.²³ This would prove to be a long-term trend which the mainstream churches had little hope of reversing, for as Hugh McLeod has put it, the 1960s proved to be the defining moment when faith ‘became optional’.²⁴

This upheaval inevitably prompted discussion within the churches on how Christianity should respond to the new secular culture. As Machin has pointed out, ‘None of these questions was unfamiliar before the 1960s, though they now appeared in more concentrated and challenging form.’²⁵ A split soon emerged, however, between progressives who sought to adapt Christian prophecy to this new world order, and conservatives whose inclination was to firmly reinstate traditional moral and doctrinal values.²⁶ Hugh McLeod cites theologian John Robinson and moral campaigner Mary Whitehouse as illustrative of the sharp divide within Anglicanism in this period. Indeed Robinson’s controversial reshaping of Christianity around modern society as set out in *Honest to God* could not be further from Mrs Whitehouse’s moral crusade against the forces of ‘permissiveness’.²⁷ Fork lines were drawn between those who argued that Christianity needed to adapt in order to survive, and those who viewed any accommodation as a corruption of Christianity and a capitulation to secularism. This schism soon permeated all areas of church policy, from music to liturgy through to politics, and gradually this bifurcation between traditionalists and reformers came to supplant (but not replace) existing divisions between anglo-catholics, evangelicals and liberals. New alliances were thus formed between liberal evangelicals and anglo-catholics who embraced reform, and conservative evangelicals and anglo-catholics who were determined to rein in these changes. Reflecting on the nature of this separation within the Church in the early 1980s, conservative Bishop of London, Graham Leonard, described it in the following terms:

It is a realignment between those on the one hand who believe that the Christian Gospel is revealed by God, is to be heard and received and that its purpose is to enable men and women to obey God in love, and through them for creation itself to be redeemed. On the other hand are those who believe that it can and should be modified and adapted to the

²³ See Appendix I for statistics on the decline of worship, Christian marriages and the churches.

²⁴ McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p.259.

²⁵ Machin, *Churches and Social Issues*, p.179.

²⁶ As Alan Gilbert has explained, the common response from the churches to greater secularism has been one of either ‘accommodation’ or ‘resistance’: Alan D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: a History of the Secularisation of Modern Society* (London, 1980), p.102.

²⁷ McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, pp.228-234.

cultural and intellectual attitudes and demands of successive generations and indeed originates in them.²⁸

During the 1960s and 1970s it was the liberals who were dominant, with a wave of reformist optimism leading to an updating of the Anglican liturgy, worship and music styles in a sincere belief that modernisation would ensure Christianity's appeal in changing times. Meanwhile, Anglican bishops were instrumental in the passing of legislation relating to abortion, homosexuality, capital punishment and divorce. Church reports outlining the 'Christian' perspective on these issues directly influenced the drafting of these laws whilst the Church's endorsement lent a much-needed spiritual legitimacy to these changes.²⁹ If this involvement by the Anglican leadership reflected an acceptance that Biblical notions of 'sin' could no longer be set in law, then it also reflected a widespread belief within the Church that little was to be gained from preaching resolute Christian moral standards which many in society no longer upheld.³⁰ Even though only a small minority of clergy subscribed to the radical theology associated with 'South Bank religion', by the mid-1970s few could deny that the nation's moral code and the Church's role in sustaining these values had been fundamentally reordered.

In truth, clergymen appeared ever more comfortable in speaking about the morality of politics and economics than on the morality of the individual, with this period seeing Anglican clergymen (and those from other denominations) become increasingly involved in progressive political causes. Men in dog-collars could thus be seen leading the CND 'pilgrimages' to Aldermaston, calling for a cricket boycott of South Africa and pioneering pressure groups such as the homeless charity Shelter.³¹ In particular, evangelicalism underwent a profound development in this period. The gathering of the National Evangelical Congress in 1967 at Keele proved to be a turning point when evangelicalism

²⁸ Graham Leonard, 'By Whose Authority?' in Dwight Longenecker (ed.), *The Path To Rome: Modern Journeys to the Catholic Church* (Bodmin, 1999), pp.19-20.

²⁹ The key Church reports were *The Problem of Homosexuality* (1954), *Ought Suicide to be a Crime?* (1959), *Abortion* (1965) and *Putting Asunder* (1966). For a full explanation of this involvement and influence see: Matthew Grimley, 'Law, morality and Secularisation: The Church of England and the Wolfenden Report, 1954-1967', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol.60, No.4, (October 2009), pp.725-41; Christie Davies, 'Religion, Politics, and "Permissive" legislation' in Paul Badham (ed.), *Religion, State, and Society in Modern Britain* (Lampeter, 1989), pp.321-43; Owen Chadwick *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford, 1990), ch.6; Holden, *Makes and Manners*, chs.4-5; McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, pp.219-226.

³⁰ McLeod argues that those involved in the passing of this legislation were 'pragmatic Christians' who recognised a division between morality and the law: *The Religious Crisis*, p.230.

³¹ On the particular issue of South Africa, See Robert A. Skinner, 'The Roots of Solidarity: Race, Religion and the Social and Moral Foundations of British Anti-Apartheid Activism, 1946-58' (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2004).

broke free from its Victorian moralistic and pietistic traditions and embraced its social and ecumenical mission.³² Anglicanism, whether of an evangelical, liberal or anglo-catholic ilk, also drew inspiration from the development of different theologies (both Catholic and Protestant) from across the globe including Black liberation theology in the US, notions of social justice emerging in the decolonised developing world, and Catholic liberation theology in South America.³³ This exposure to radical theo-political outlooks, which many Anglican clergy had experienced first-hand, gently reshaped the Anglican mindset. There was now a growing consensus amongst the clergy that the Church must shed its image of silent compliance, speak out against injustice and stand shoulder to shoulder with the oppressed in society. This desire for the Church to assert and distinguish itself as an independent voice added further weight to existing calls for greater autonomy from the state. In the 1970s, the formation of the General Synod and the reform of the procedure for selecting bishops, therefore, was on the initiative of clerics rather than politicians. These changes reflected an ecclesiastical desire for self-governance and a belief that the complete supremacy of the state over the Church was an archaic and cumbersome system which could no longer be justified. The Church of England's position as the established Church remained very much in-tact, yet these changes did lead some to question whether the Church was on a slow road towards disestablishment.³⁴

If independence from temporal power was one aim, then so too was a more aggressive stance towards capitalism. A crucial facet of 1960s post-materialist culture was its moral assault on Western capitalism; a mood which gave birth to the ecological and fair-trade movements. These were causes in which liberal Christians had taken a considerable lead. The Christian critique of capitalism that emerged in this era was much more combative and all encompassing than its earlier gestations. Taking a global rather than a domestic perspective, it was critical not only of the immorality of the market place, but also the operations of global corporations, industrial culture and the ethos of wealth creation

³² Rene Padila & Chris Sugden, *How Evangelicals Endorsed Social Responsibility* (Grove, 1985); John Wolffe (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* (London, 1995); David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London, 1989). Most of the impetus and enthusiasm for social Christianity up until this point had come from anglo-catholics, while evangelicals had tended to focus on personal conversion rather than collective action.

³³ Crucial in this respect was the World Council of Churches, which provided a forum for an exchange of ideas and stimulated an interest in the development of different theologies from different parts of the world.

³⁴ Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics*, pp.57-65. Parliament still had to accept and pass Church Measures. Under the revised system for the appointment of bishops brought in 1977, the Prime Minister retained the final decision. The Crown Appointments Committee was required to submit two names in order of preference, but the Prime Minister was free to select either name or ask the committee for further suggestions.

itself.³⁵ The extreme manifestation of this was liberation theology, which was an explicit tying of Marxist ideas of oppression and solidarity with Biblical notions of fellowship and a divine 'bias to the poor'.³⁶ The following words from Argentinian theologian, Jose Miguez Bonino, gives a flavour of this uncompromising judgement on capitalism:

The basic ethos of capitalism is definitely anti-Christian: it is the maximising of economic gain, the raising of man's grasping impulse, the idolising of the strong, the subordination of man to the economic production. Humanisation is for capitalism an unintended by-product, while for socialism, an explicit goal.³⁷

As will become clear, liberation theology did influence some radical Anglicans, however, its impact on those leading the Church of England was minimal. Broadly speaking, Anglicanism in the first half of the twentieth century had gradually shifted politically to the left. What the experience of the 1960s had done was to highlight some of the failures and restrictions of interwar liberal Anglicanism and to nudge it further in a leftward direction. It would therefore be incorrect to assume that the Church of England, on the eve of the Thatcher decade was a radically reordered, politically galvanised Church, even if some traditionalist Anglicans may have viewed it as such.³⁸

Much more important was that the Church was fundamentally spilt on all of this. The 1960s could be characterised as a period of optimism and hope for liberal Christianity, yet by the mid-1970s the conservative movement within Anglicanism began to gain prominence.³⁹ Calling for the reinforcement of Christian morality and the maintenance of traditional liturgical and ecclesiastical practises (particularly an exclusively male priesthood), conservatives denounced liberal Anglicanism as an undermining of tradition and evidence of the infiltration of contemporary secular thought within the Church. One particular charge was that the liberal Anglican hierarchy had politicised Christianity through its deliberate (but in their view false) tying of Christianity with atheistic socialism. The leading conservative critic, historian Edward Norman used the occasion of the 1978 BBC Reith

³⁵ Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Downers Grove, Ill., 1977) put forward the Christian case for aid to the developing world; J. Philip Wogaman, *Christians and the Great Economic Debate: An Ethical Analysis* (London, 1977).

³⁶ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York, Trans. 1973); J. David Turner, *An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (London, 1994).

³⁷ Jose Miguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists: the Mutual Challenge to Revolution* (London, 1976), p.115.

³⁸ Ronald H. Preston, *Church and Society in the Late Twentieth Century: The Economic and Political Task* (London, 1983), pp.75-92; G.H. Moyser, 'The Church of England and Politics: Patterns and Trends' in Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today*, pp.1-24.

³⁹ Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain*, pp.133-157.

Lectures to take issue with liberation theology, which in his view was not only a debasement of doctrine, but demonstrative of the Christian Church politicising theology in order to maintain credibility in the modern world:

The present identification of Christianity with western bourgeois liberalism seems an unnecessary consecration of a highly relative and unstable set of values, the more unsatisfactory because it is generally done unconsciously. Liberalism actually occupies a very narrow band on the spectrum of political theories. To regard it as the distillation of Christian wisdom, as the contemporary repository of a timeless faith, is, to say the least, a short-term view.⁴⁰

The traditionalist faction drew much of its source and strength from the growth of conservative evangelicalism in this period while it also included many disaffected anglo-catholics among its supporters. In political terms, some traditionalists were of the 'pietist' tradition, believing Christianity had no role in the temporal sphere of politics, whereas others, as we shall see, came increasingly to link Christian values with political Conservatism and, in particular, to stress the doctrinal basis of capitalism. The result of all this, however, was an internal religio-political divide within the Church: an alliance between liberal Anglicans and those on the left, and traditional Anglicanism and the New Right.⁴¹

Thus the social and cultural changes of the 1960s not only triggered a collapse of Christian faith amongst the populace, but also gave rise to an internal 'cultural-political war' within the Church.⁴² This polarisation was not confined to Anglicanism but was part of a broader trend within all religions, not least the Catholic Church, where the liberal Vatican II reforms were subsequently curbed by a conservative backlash.⁴³ Its effects could also be seen in the Anglican Communion, where progressives (mostly from North America) came into conflict with conservatives (especially evangelicals from the African continent) over the acceptance of homosexual and female priests. Indeed, it appeared that just as

⁴⁰ Norman, *Christianity and the World Order* (London, 1979), p.7-8; Rachel Tingle, *Another Gospel? An Account of the Growing Involvement of the Anglican Church in Secular Politics* (London, 1988), pp.41-44. For a response to Norman, Charles Elliot et al., *Christian Faith and Politics Hopes. A Reply to E.R. Norman* (London, 1979); Robin Gill, *Prophecy and Praxis* (London, 1981), ch.2.

⁴¹ Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics*, ch.11.

⁴² Robert Towler and A.P.M Coxon in their research into Anglican ordinands from this period concluded that the division between what they deemed as 'antipuritan' and 'puritan' clergy was cultural and political as much as it was religious: Robert Towler & A.P.M. Coxon, *The Fate of the Anglican Clergy* (Basingstoke, 1979).

⁴³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London, 2009), pp.996-999.

ecumenicalism had dissipated sectarian tensions among denominations, this was superseded by the growth of internal tensions within the churches themselves.⁴⁴

The 1980s began with a new Archbishop at Lambeth Palace and the return of a Conservative Prime Minister to No.10. The factions that Mrs Thatcher had to contend with within her party, however, were nothing compared to the tensions that Runcie had to face in his Church. Anglicanism was about to enter a period of extreme unease, which would become even more heightened and fractious as the decade wore on. It would involve not only discussions about internal ecclesiastical decisions such as the ordination of women, but also the role of the Church in society and its position on politics. At the helm however, was a set of leaders who were steeped in the liberal Anglican tradition, influenced by radical theology and confident of their independence from the state. Thus with the rise of neo-Conservatism, they soon felt compelled to take a much more interventionist position on the public stage.

II. Public Anglicanism in the 1980s: the Channels of Priestly Pressure

The 1980s inspired a new wave of Anglican political activism leading to the formation of new pressure groups, an increasingly politicised Synod and an explosion of Christian-political literature. Tactics and modes of political engagement varied, as did the political message and theological perspective. In fact, the disparate nature of the Church of England makes it extremely difficult to ascertain the 'official view of the Church' on political matters; not even speeches by bishops or Synod resolutions could be said to be universally representative. Set out below are the various Anglican 'voices' which together constituted the Church of England's opposition to 'Thatcherism', of which the most prominent and important of these were undoubtedly the bishops.

The Bishops

The 1980s saw leading prelates such as David Jenkins at Durham, David Sheppard at Liverpool, Hugh Montefiore at Birmingham and Stanley Booth-Clibborn at Manchester emerge as the figureheads of the new era of Christian social concern during the Thatcher years.⁴⁵ Politically aware and publicly outspoken, this generation of bishops was much more inclined to be openly critical of the state than to voice their worries behind closed doors. This was not a new phenomenon, bishops such as John Robinson and Mervyn Stockwood

⁴⁴ McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p.100.

⁴⁵ Here the focus is on diocesan bishops which are differentiated from suffragan bishops. When reference is made to a suffragan bishop in the text, it is made explicit.

had gained notoriety in the 1960s as prominent radicals, although they were never seen as being representative of the Anglican mainstream.⁴⁶ The 1980s stands out as a time when those in high ecclesiastical office adopted a confrontational position against the government and achieved an almost celebrity-like status within the media.⁴⁷ The prelates varied in personality, experience and theological tradition. David Sheppard, for example, was an evangelical and former England cricketer whose public prominence in the 1980s was confirmed through his successful partnership with Catholic Archbishop Worlock in Liverpool and his outspokenness against the government's record on poverty and unemployment. On the other side of Lancashire, in Manchester, was Stanley Booth-Clibborn, a card-carrying member of the Labour party and a direct descendant of Salvation Army founder William Booth. After spending the first decade of his ministry working in Kenya and subsequently, at various posts within England, he was eventually elevated to the See of Manchester in 1979. In the chief diocese of the Midlands in Birmingham was Hugh Montefiore. Born into a wealthy Jewish family, he had undergone a conversion to Christianity at 16 while at Rugby school. After serving in the war, he soon made his way up the ecclesiastical ladder, firstly, as suffragan bishop of Kingston and then subsequently, at Birmingham from 1977-1987. David Jenkins, on the other hand, was an Anglican liberal who had worked at the World Council of Churches and as director of the William Temple Foundation before becoming a professor of theology at Leeds University. He caused a public outcry soon after being elected to Durham in 1984 when he questioned the historical validity of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection in a television interview. His reputation as a controversial figure was sealed when he used his enthronement sermon to attack the government's handling of the miners' strike. John Habgood, the Archbishop of York was a much more cautious and thoughtful man. As a former scientist he was particularly interested in the subject of medical ethics and as an ecclesiastical pragmatist, he was heavily involved in ecumenical matters and liturgical reform, providing much of the inspiration behind the controversial modernised version of the Prayer Book. Rarely critical of the government, Habgood advocated the Church of England's central role as a source of unity in an era of social and political polarisation. Archbishop Runcie, on the other hand, had earned his priestly spurs as Principle of Cuddesdon theological college before becoming

⁴⁶ Mervyn Stockwood (1913-1995) had been Bishop of Southwark between 1959-1980. Both Sheppard and Montefiore had worked as suffragan bishops under him at Southwark. John Robinson (1919-1983) had been the suffragan Bishop of Woolwich between 1959-1969.

⁴⁷ For an analysis of the Anglican and Catholic bishops and the nature of ecclesiastical leadership in the 1980s, see F. Longford, *The Bishops: A Study of Leaders in the Church Today* (London, 1986); Simon Lee & Peter Stanford, *Believing Bishops* (London, 1990); Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics*, ch.5.

Bishop of St Albans. A high-Anglican liberal, Archbishop Runcie was frequently criticised for sitting on the fence on ecclesiastical matters although he took a strong lead on political issues such as the *Faith in the City* report and the miners' strike. Separate from this group, but an equally important figure, was the Bishop of London, Graham Leonard. As the most senior anglo-catholic traditionalist, he became the figurehead of the conservative movement, leading the opposition against the ordination of women and the proposed Covenant with the Nonconformist churches. He also stood out from his senior ecclesiastical colleagues for the hard-line position he took on homosexuality and divorce. Leonard was to become increasingly disillusioned with Anglicanism, especially over the ordination of women issue and eventually converted to Roman Catholicism in 1994, soon after his retirement.

During the 1980s, the press tended to present any utterance by a prelate as considered Church policy. Bishops' personal archives, however, indicate the varying priorities of the individual prelates, revealing them to be autonomous and independent figures with a free rein to comment on public affairs as they pleased. The lack of clear Public Relations management from Lambeth Palace or Church House perhaps explains why a number of bishops experienced a somewhat troubled relationship with the press.⁴⁸ Despite these differences, the bishops could collectively be described as theologically moderate, ecumenical in outlook and broadly centrist in politics.⁴⁹ They were also all from solid Establishment stock: most were from the middle-to-upper class, had been educated at one of the nation's leading public schools and had attended either Oxford or Cambridge.⁵⁰

One of the key ways that bishops were able to contribute to political debate was of course through their presence in the House of Lords.⁵¹ In the eighties, the Church sought to maximise this privilege, with Lambeth Palace ensuring that the bishop's bench was always occupied during crucial debates and that attendees were fully briefed.⁵² Prelates' division records give an insight into which way they swayed on legislative matters. Between 1979-1990, 61 per cent of the total votes cast by the bishops were against the government,

⁴⁸ The fact that a number of dioceses appointed press officers in this period was an attempt to rectify this.

⁴⁹ Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics*, pp.125-131.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.111.

⁵¹ Partington, *The Contribution of the Church of England Bishops*.

⁵² Partington shows that the most prominent bishops such as David Sheppard and David Jenkins in the 1980s were not necessarily the most vocal members in the chamber: Partington, *The Contribution*, pp.78-81. The Archbishop of Canterbury attended only 60 times in this period, the Archbishop of York just 41: p.81. Naturally those bishops located in dioceses within commutable distance to Westminster attended more regularly than those further away. Revealingly however, Episcopal contributions reached a peak during Mrs Thatcher's second term (1983-7) when the crucial decisions about industrial relations, unemployment and poverty were being made.

in contrast to 27 per cent of voters in favour. David Say, the Bishop of Rochester, was the most consistent with 70 out of 88 votes against. Other notable opponents included Stanley Booth-Clibborn (42/46), Ronald Bowlby at Southwark, (36/43) and David Sheppard on (30/39).⁵³ The Archbishop of Canterbury voted on a ratio of 6:1 against, while the Archbishop of York opposed the government on every occasion he entered the division lobby. The content of their speeches tells a similar story, for only 49 contributions were in support of government measures, compared with 172 against.⁵⁴

David Sheppard, writing to the Bishop of Birmingham in 1983 to congratulate him on being formally inducted into the Lords, mused: 'It's a funny place....it is also confusing to estimate how much notice anyone takes of what one says...my own view is that we can exaggerate the significance of what goes on there, but I still believe we have to try to keep some issues alive in that forum.'⁵⁵ These sentiments reflected the general attitude of the bishops towards the second chamber for, although they welcomed the privilege, they were aware of its limitations as a place of influence or for reaching out to the general public. The twenty-six bishops who sat in the Lords were rarely decisive in deciding the fate of legislation, with the British Nationality Act (1981) and the Education Act (1988) the only two significant occasions when their intervention proved critical.⁵⁶ Importantly, however, the prelates were not seen as an archaic irrelevance by the Lords Temporal and lobbyists, and in the absence of adequate representation of other faiths, they were considered as offering a vital Christian/religious perspective on forthcoming legislation.⁵⁷ The Lords Spiritual therefore did more than provide the ceremonial daily prayers in the Upper House during this period. The bishops dressed in their full ecclesiastical regalia, both visually and verbally, cut distinctive figures on the benches.

Of more significance than the House of Lords, was the attention the bishops received from the media. A speech by a prelate was much more likely to gain coverage than either a Synod resolution, a statement by other religious leaders or a press release from a faceless bureaucratic organisation such as the British Council of Churches.⁵⁸ This was partly

⁵³ Ibid., pp.98-100.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.172. Yet there were also members of the Episcopal bench who supported the government, notably Maurice Wood, the Bishop of Norwich, who was not only a regular attendee but voted 43 times with the government and only six times against: p.99.

⁵⁵ LCA, SP, National Issues Box, House of Lords file, David Sheppard to Hugh Montefiore, 11 April 1983.

⁵⁶ See chapter 6 of this thesis for the Episcopal contribution to the 1988 Education Act.

⁵⁷ The Bishop of Manchester, for example, received numerous letters from local councils, pressure groups and other lobbyists urging him to vote for/against various bills: Manchester Central Library, Booth-Clibborn Papers, Z files, Section II, 2/01 Politics/national file; 2/02 Politics/local file.

⁵⁸ Lee & Stanford, *Believing Bishops*, pp.19-27.

because controversial utterances from Anglican prelates were deemed headline-worthy, yet it also pertained to the fact, as David Sheppard recognised: ‘There remains a certain mystique about being a bishop that in a less religious age seems to hold sway.’⁵⁹ Press interviews and TV and radio appearances provided the main means through which bishops were able to reach out to the non-churchgoing mass. With bishops regularly featuring on such topical programmes as *Question Time* – with even the Archbishop of Canterbury appearing on popular chat-show *Parkinson* – it could be argued that this generation of prelates enjoyed more exposure, coverage and publicity than any of their predecessors.⁶⁰ Religious broadcasting also played an important part here, for in this period its content branched out beyond televised worship to the production of programmes exploring the Christian critique of society and politics.⁶¹ Equally crucial was the (predominantly hostile) right-wing press. *The Times*, *Mail*, *Express*, *Telegraph* and even the *Sun* frequently ran front-page stories on the Church and this coverage proved pivotal in engineering a dialogue between liberal Anglicanism and the New Right, as the editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* inadvertently explained:

I don’t recall in recent times reading a speech by a bishop that I’d want to see printed in my paper for edification. Rather we report them because we get hot under the collar when the Bishop of Durham says something that a bishop has no business saying.⁶²

Board for Social Responsibility

The bishops may have received the greatest attention from the press, yet it was the Board for Social Responsibility (BSR), a quasi-think-tank located within the Church’s Headquarters in Westminster, which was in charge of devising the Church’s policy on national and international political issues.⁶³ Its aims were three-fold: firstly, to coordinate

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.25.

⁶⁰ Bishops also proved themselves to be prolific writers, with these years seeing a host of publications penned by prelates on political themes. These books, often written during sabbaticals, afforded them the opportunity to set out in detail their understanding on the politics of the day. Publishers also clearly felt that there was a market for collections of bishops speeches and sermons. The fact that a number of these bishops wrote autobiographies is also testimony to their high-public profile during these years: see bibliography for full list of publications.

⁶¹ Ted Harrison, *The Durham Affair* (London, 1985), p.12-3; BBC Written Archives Centre, Central Religious Advisory Committee Files 1978-1982, File 1: R78/810/1, Anne Forbes, ‘A note on a neglected aspect of Religious Broadcasting’, 1980.

⁶² Peregrine Worsthorpe, quoted in Lee & Stanford, *Believing Bishops*, p.27.

⁶³ The BSR, based in Church House, was comprised of seven different committees: Social Policy Committee; Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee; International Affairs Committee; Development Affairs Committee; Race, Pluralism and Community Resource Group; Prison Chaplaincy Advisory Group and Environmental Issues Reference Panel. For a full exposition of the Board’s work see Clark, *The Church Under Thatcher*, pp.71-78; Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics*, pp.332-348.

the Anglican response on the key issues of the day; secondly, to act as a lobby group to enact pressure on Parliament and Whitehall; and thirdly, as an educational body, disseminating its message to the Church, laity and the populace at large.

The BSR, with a prelate at its head, comprised of seven different committees of which the most relevant here is the Social Policy Committee (SPC) and the Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee (IEAC).⁶⁴ On these sat not only clerics, but also representatives from government, industry, academia, voluntary sector and unions. The IEAC for example counted Mr Roy Woolliscroft of the Mirror Group newspapers, Mr Geoffrey Holland of the Manpower Services Commission, Mr David Warburton from the Home Office, a representative from GMWU Union and theologian John Atherton amongst its members. The minutes of the SPC also reveal its close relations with non-governmental organisations such as Age Concern, The Children's Society, Church Housing, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Mother's Union, Church Army and the British Council of Churches.⁶⁵ This cross-fertilisation between the secular and religious spheres is further illustrated by the number of academics, civil servants and third-sector representatives who sat on the working parties for BSR reports.

One of the chief operations of the BSR was the publication of pamphlets offering a Christian perspective on contemporary issues. Of the forty-six of these produced by the BSR between 1979-1990, forty-one concerned social and economic policy, the remaining five addressed international affairs, the environment and the developing world. The SPC (whose remit included social policy as well as personal moral issues) produced fifteen publications, of which only two of these addressed sexual-moral and medical ethics (homosexuality and divorce, human fertilisation and euthanasia) with the majority dealing with social policy themes such as housing, welfare and benefits.⁶⁶ The Board's quarterly journal, *Crucible*, also demonstrates this prioritisation of social-economic issues over ethical or moral concerns. The BSR reports sold few copies yet their ideas filtered down to the lower echelons of the Church through debates in the Synod, diocesan newsletters and the Board's network of local officers.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *The Church of England Yearbook 1990* (London, 1990).

⁶⁵ Lambeth Palace Library, Board for Social Responsibility Papers, Social Policy Committee files 1984, BSR/SPC/M/2, Report from the Secretary of the Social Policy Committee BSR (84) 52, October 1984.

⁶⁶ The other two reports addressed themes of alcohol misuse and ageism in society. Interestingly the Board did not produce a publication on the subject of abortion, which is surprising given its prominence in Parliament during the 1980s. The SPC did however submit a submission to the House of Commons Social Services Committee on the issue.

⁶⁷ BSR reports never sold more than 3000 compared with the full version of the *Faith in the City* report which sold 50,000: Clark, *The Church under Thatcher*, p.74. For the work of the diocesan social responsibility officers: *Ibid.*, p.77-8.

In general terms, the literature produced by the BSR promulgated a centre-left position and was largely critical of the Conservative government. The reports by-and-large received a favourable hearing in the Synod, although mutterings of opposition particularly from the House of Laity pointed to the fact that BSR reports were not representative of the whole Church.⁶⁸ As the decade wore on, there was a growing discontent about the politicised work of the BSR, which, in conservative evangelical Rachel Tingle's view, was 'an unrepresentative minority' operating 'as a pressure group at the heart of the Church and, through that, on our wider society.'⁶⁹

The Synod

The formation of the General Synod in 1970, with its three houses of bishops, clergy and laity, aimed at making the Church more accountable and democratic, yet in fact it had the effect of reinforcing factionalism within the Church. During the 1980s, as the pressing issues of female ordination, interdenominational relations and liturgical reform came to the fore, so the tri-annual meetings of the Synod became a forum for division rather than unity. The composition of the Synod changed over this period, positions hardened and factions became more acute. Liberals may have remained the dominant force, but they were increasingly being challenged by traditionalists, particularly from the House of Laity.⁷⁰

At the meetings of the General Synod, although ecclesiastical subjects inevitably dominated the agenda, resolutions on domestic politics, emanating from the BSR, diocesan synods or individuals, also generated heated discussion within the debating chamber. The resolutions on political subjects were always quite vague, but were often a thinly veiled condemnation of Conservative government policy. The 1984 motion on the economy for example, which affirmed that 'economic values are not self-justifying but need to be set within the larger context of human values', was typical of the sort of language emanating from the Synod.⁷¹ There were some instances where more specific resolutions were agreed such as the demand for the long-term unemployed to be entitled to supplementary benefit and the call for the government to increase expenditure on job creation schemes rather than reduce taxation.⁷² Resolutions however, tended to undergo a series of amendments during the debating process which would inevitably have the effect of watering-down the original

⁶⁸ See Appendix VI for a breakdown of votes in the Synod relating to political matters and BSR publications.

⁶⁹ Rachel Tingle, *Another Gospel?*, p.21.

⁷⁰ Partisan groupings within the 1975/1980 Synod are outlined in Appendix IV.

⁷¹ A list of relevant resolutions relating to political matters are given in the Appendix VI.

⁷² The latter had originated as a private members motion which were always more specific and thus more political.

proposal. The final statements passed may have been uncontroversial, yet the actual debates (which tended to be reported in the press) demonstrated the breadth of opinion in the Synod on political matters, not least the prevalence of strong Conservative party support within the House of Laity.⁷³ While the clergy and laity may have stood for election to the chamber chiefly out of a desire to influence ecclesiastical affairs, they also found that the Synod proved to be a forum where their secular political prejudices were exercised as well.

Anglican Voluntary Organisations and Pressure Groups

Outside the Church of England's formal bureaucratic structures, there were a number of independent charities and foundations whose knowledge on the ground and efforts at mobilising parishioners proved crucial to the Church's presence on the national stage in this period.⁷⁴ The 1980s saw the re-birth of existing religious charities and the establishment of new bodies devoted to engaging and lobbying on the issue of poverty in Britain.

Organisations such as the Children's Society and Christian Action (CA) worked alongside new groups such as Church Action on Poverty (CAP) and Church Action with the Unemployed (CAWTU) combining remedial work with political activism and campaigning. Church Action on Poverty, established in 1980 in Manchester, operated solely as lobby group and partnered up with secular bodies concerned with the poverty agenda.⁷⁵ It also had strong links with the official channels of the Church, counting two members of the BSR on its board. Christian Action, on the other hand, was an ecumenical body, which dated back to 1942. It saw its role as primarily educative and took a leading role in *Faith in the City* – incidentally it had been its Chairman, the Rev. Eric James, who had first proposed the idea of a report.⁷⁶ The pivotal role of these organisations, as will be explored, lay in their ability to stimulate interest at parish level and provide insights and information which fed into and reinforced the Church's role on the national stage.

⁷³ For an in-depth analysis of the make-up of the Synod see Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics*, chs.7-11.

⁷⁴ A full list is given in Peter Brierley (ed.), *UK Christian Handbook 1985/86* (London, 1984), pp.410-7. For the involvement of Christian charities in this period see Geoffrey Finalyson, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare 1830-1990* (Oxford, 1994), ch.4.

⁷⁵ In 1990, the number of paid-up CAP members was 1067: Church Action on Poverty Archives, Manchester, National Co-ordinator's Report, Executive Committee Meeting, 27-28 June 1990. For an idea of its work see, for example, CAPA, Pre-Budget submission to the Chancellor from Church Action on Poverty, March 1985.

⁷⁶ In 1986, Christian Action had a total of 1500 paid members: Lambeth Palace Library, Christian Action Archive, MS 4445, fol.148.

Christian Commentators and Theologians

This engagement with the politics of Thatcherism even extended into the theology faculties of Britain's universities. Professor R.H. Preston of Manchester, for example, author of several books on the interrelationship between religion and politics, served on the BSR committees which produced the *Not just for the Poor* report in 1986 and *Changing Britain* in 1987.⁷⁷ Another important figure was Duncan Forrester, who was head of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh and wrote a series of books on the nature and purpose of the Church's prophecy in the 1980s.⁷⁸ This was in addition to the Urban Theology Unit at the University of Sheffield, the interdenominational Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission (established in 1980) and the William Temple Foundation in Manchester, whose work centred on the nature of the Church's ministry and prophecy in the urban context.⁷⁹ The latter was home to the Rev. John Atherton, Canon of Manchester Cathedral. As a member of the *Faith in the City* committee, author of numerous books, and member of the BSR, Atherton was both an active member and a constructive critic of contemporary social Anglicanism. This period also saw a growth in literature pertaining to the nature and purpose of social Christianity which was seemingly of genuine interest to publishers and readers. Between 1977-1986 books penned on social and ecclesiastical theology out-numbered those on Biblical theology and moral theology.⁸⁰

This brief survey of the various tentacles of Anglican social activism in the 1980s points to the way in which the Church of England's contribution was not confined to a few adverse statements by wayward bishops, but involved a proactive and intellectual engagement with the politics of the New Right at all levels – from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to the individual member of Christian Action. In view of this analysis, the remainder of this chapter sets out how Anglican leaders justified the Church's involvement in the politics of the day and its continual relevance in a secular plural nation.

⁷⁷ See R.H. Preston, *Religion and the Persistence of Capitalism* (London, 1979); *The Future of Christian Ethics* (London, 1987) and *Church and Society in the Late Twentieth Century* (London, 1983).

⁷⁸ Duncan B. Forrester, *Christianity and the Future of Welfare and Beliefs, Values and Politics: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age* (Oxford, 1989); Duncan B. Forrester & Malcolm Cuthbertson, *Rethinking Christian Action* (London, 1989).

⁷⁹ Founded in 1969, the UTU sought to bring insights of theology and sociology to the problems of inner city and to create a network of clergy working on these areas as did the William Temple Foundation, which had been established in 1947.

⁸⁰ Peter Brierley, 'Religion' in A.H. Halsey (ed.), *British Social Trends since 1900* (London, 2nd revised edition, 1988), Table 13.31, p.560.

III. A Christian Nation in Thought rather than Deed

Writing in the late seventies on the plight of religious and communal life in Britain, theologian Daniel Jenkins lamented that the established Church gave ‘the impression that she has lost heart about her role as the church of the English people’ and that she was ‘more interested in herself as an institution than she is in England’. Jenkins concluded that the Church of England was on a ‘slow and cautious’ retreat into ‘denominational status’.⁸¹ Jenkins was vocalising a then widely-held view that greater ecclesiastical autonomy coupled with religious decline had caused the Church to become internalised and neglectful of its duties to the nation at large. Writing three years later, *The Times* religious correspondent Clifford Longley agreed: ‘the tendency has been to draw away from the popular concept of Christianity into a kind of inward-looking churchiness that emphasises the distance between “church Christianity” and “the popular sort”’.⁸² In the 1970s then, many considered that the distinction between regular worshippers and nominal members had become so acute that Anglicanism had become a congregational sect rather than the territorial Church of the land.⁸³ When in 1976 the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan, issued a ‘Call to the Nation’ urging the public to write to him of their concerns about the social, economic and spiritual breakdown of Britain, it proved to be a rather short-lived and inconsequential exercise. The fact that the BBC also refused Coggan’s request to broadcast his ‘Call’ seemed to symbolise the redundancy of public Anglicanism in a secular era.⁸⁴ Yet, this concept, namely an understanding that Britain remained a Christian nation and that the established Church had a responsibility to vocalise Christian unitary values in the public domain, underwent a significant revival during the Thatcher years.

Instrumental in this change of thinking was a report produced in 1981 by a committee of leaders from the Anglican Communion, entitled *To a Rebellious House*. The committee had concluded that Anglicanism had become stifled by a bureaucratic and internalised perspective and urged the Mother Church to rediscover its prophetic voice to

⁸¹ Daniel Jenkins, *The British: Their Identity and Their Religion* (London, 1975), p.68. Daniel Jenkins was a theologian and minister in the United Reformed Church.

⁸² Clifford Longley, ‘Folk Religion poses challenge to the Church’, *The Times*, 23 October 1978.

⁸³ John Habgood writing in 1983 concluded that the financial crises of the 1970s forced parishes to become wholly reliant on the financial contributions of their committed parishioners, which in turn had led the Church to adopt a more introspective outlook in this decade: Habgood, *Church and Nation in a Secular Age* (London, 1983), p.88-9.

⁸⁴ Donald Coggan, *Call to the Nation* (London, 1975). Reflecting on the Church in the 1970s, Alan Gilbert observed that there was a ‘post-mortem air to the entire debate’ about Christianity: Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain*, p.10.

the nation.⁸⁵ Speaking at the Synod debate on the report in 1982, the then Archbishop of York, Stuart Blanch, mused on this point and cautioned synodical representatives against perceiving the outside world as ‘secular’.⁸⁶ Asserting that ‘folk religion remains a powerful influence in the attitudes people form and decisions which they make,’ Blanch called for a realignment of priorities within the Church: ‘the fields are ripe for harvest if we can only get out into the fields and not spend all our time mending the barns or oiling the machinery.’⁸⁷

Anglican statements from the 1980s are marked by the way in which the bishops, clergy and pressure groups continually referred to the nation as ‘Christian’ and drew on a notion of ‘folk Christianity’ as a way of asserting the position of the Church in the public realm. On the occasion of his enthronement in 1983, for example, the newly appointed Archbishop of York, John Habgood made a special plea for the Church to embrace its national responsibilities, proclaiming in an interview with the *Yorkshire Post*: ‘One of the great gifts the Church of England has to give to the Church at large is that it is concerned with the life of a nation, the whole nation.’⁸⁸ Public Anglicanism was not a new concept, for as Matthew Grimley has shown, William Temple and others espoused similar ideas in the first half of the century. Political intervention by clergy was resented and challenged in the 1930s as much as it was in the 1980s. The chief difference, however, was that Runcie and his bishops’ claims about the central place of Christianity and the Church of England in national public life could not be assumed, but needed clarifying as well as justifying in these more secularised times.⁸⁹

For the Anglican hierarchy of the 1980s, the Church’s legitimacy was rooted in an understanding that, despite declining congregations, an underlying Christian ethos remained within the nation. This faith may not have manifested itself in weekly worship, they contended, but it continued to act as an important guiding force in the nation’s political and moral values. Speaking on *Thought for the Day* on the wedding day of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981, the Archbishop of York, offered what he considered to be the

⁸⁵ *To a Rebellious House? Report of the Church of England’s Partners in Mission Consultation* (London, 1981). See also *Proc. of the Gen. Synod, 1982*, Vol.13, No.1, 17 February 1982, pp.49-83; Vol.13, No.3, 11 November 1982, pp.954-88; Giles Ecclestone, *The Church of England and Politics* (London, 1981).

⁸⁶ The idea of two levels of Christianity, one for the mass and another for the more committed was not a new idea, a similar division had been described by T.S. Eliot in his *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London, 1939).

⁸⁷ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1982*, Vol.13, No.3, 11 November 1982, p.958. The Archbishop used the example of the popularity of religious broadcasting as evidence of the existence of a continual spirituality amongst the populace.

⁸⁸ *Yorkshire Post*, 16 November 1983.

⁸⁹ Grimley, *Citizenship*, p.223.

symbolic importance of the wedding as a ceremonial demonstration of the nation's Christian unity:

We warmly recognise the presence amongst us of many men and women of diverse race and culture and religion. But for the greater part we remain, if we are anything, a Christian nation – Christian by instinct if not by conviction. If we have any standards, if we have any spiritual aspirations they are Christian aspirations, if there is a name that still evokes some responses in our hearts, it is the name of Christ.⁹⁰

In his early morning message, the Archbishop was evoking the essential ingredients of national identity by intertwining royalty, Christianity and the nation. It was not uncommon for clergymen to evoke spiritual nationalism on royal, civic or religious ceremonies and it is hardly surprising that the Archbishop used it on this occasion given that the nation had been rocked by widespread inner city rioting only weeks before. Revealingly, however, this concept of a Christian nation was not only raised in the ceremonial sphere but also littered clergymen's statements on politics in this period. In *Faith in the City*, for example, the commission asserted that 'the British people are by a great majority a *believing* people' and that there existed a 'strong substratum of religion in British society.'⁹¹ They concluded that the thoughts and resolutions in the report were in line with the 'basic Christian principles of justice and compassion' which were shared by 'the great majority of the people of Britain'.⁹² The commission directly connected this to the role and purpose of Anglicanism, proclaiming that because the Church of England was: 'in the position of being the national Church, it has a particular duty to act as the conscience of the nation'.⁹³

Anglican leaders defined the notion of a 'Christian nation' in careful terms. They avoided making bold and ambitious statements about the strength of religious feeling amongst the populace and instead categorised it as a fundamental ethos, a residual Christianity, a faith which was hard to detect and quantify, but nonetheless prevalent and an important force guiding the lives and values of the British people. The nation was perceived Christian rather than specifically Anglican or Protestant, and was imagined as encompassing (admittedly rather vaguely) the whole of the British Isles.⁹⁴ The contention was that while

⁹⁰ Transcript deposited in York University Library, Borthwick Institute, BP, BP1/BLA/4/6/4, Royal Wedding file, *Thought for the Day*, 29 July 1981.

⁹¹ *Faith in the City*, p.66.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.xiv.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.208.

⁹⁴ *Faith in the City* was restricted to an analysis of urban poverty in England, yet the use of the term 'British people' indicated a belief that its message was meant for the entire nation.

there had undoubtedly been a decline in worship, there were limits to how ‘secular’ the nation was. This was a conscious reformulation of Christianity and the national Church within the new secular plural landscape of late-twentieth century Britain but it was also a deliberate spiritual response to the prevailing sense of national crisis that was abound from the late-1970s onwards.

This notion of ‘folk Christianity’ was not a new concept, yet in the 1980s it assumed new credibility in both clerical and academic circles. While historians challenged Weber’s theory of secularisation through empirical studies of nineteenth century urban religious culture, sociologists aimed for a more nuanced understanding of secularism within contemporary British society, looking beyond churchgoing statistics to an exploration of the existence of an ‘implicit faith’ amongst the populace.⁹⁵ Case studies such as Geoffrey Ahern’s survey of Leeds and David Clark’s analysis of a North Yorkshire village, although different in scope and detail, added to an emerging impression of a complex religious culture and an academic consensus that statistics on worship only provided half the picture.⁹⁶

Most significant, was a survey conducted in 1981 by sociologists for the European Values System Study Group (EVSSG) which examined, amongst other things, British attitudes towards religion.⁹⁷ Three-quarters of the sample claimed a belief in God while half admitted to praying regularly, yet only one-fifth stated that they were weekly worshippers. Significantly, a larger proportion of British respondents had stated they were believers than those in France, West Germany, Holland or Denmark. These findings led the group to conclude that, although Britain was on the surface more secularised than its European counterparts, basic Christian values remained strong. In the words of sociologist A. H. Halsey, who organised the survey:

They [the British] are in their normal geographical-cum-cultural position with respect to the religious Commandments to worship only one God, not to take His name in vain, and to keep the Sabbath. But with respect to honouring their parents and injunctions against murder, adultery, theft, envy and lust they out-do the Scandinavians, Northern Europeans and Latins in virtuous declaration. In short....the British are to be seen

⁹⁵ See for example, Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth 1870-1930* (Oxford, 1982).

⁹⁶ David Clark, *Between Pulpit and Pew: Folk Religion in a North Yorkshire Fishing Village* (Cambridge, 1982); Gill, *Beyond Decline: A Challenge to the Churches* (London, 1988), ch.3-4. In the late-1970s, the Network for the Study of Implicit Religion was set up by Canon Dr Edward Bailey.

⁹⁷ David Gerard, ‘Religious Attitudes and Values’ in Mark Abrams, David Gerard & Noel Timms (eds.), *Values and Social Change in Britain* (Basingstoke, 1985), pp.50-92. A breakdown of the results are given in Appendix III.

and see themselves as a relatively unchurched, nationalistic, optimistic, satisfied, conservative, and moralistic people.⁹⁸

These results prompted Clifford Longley to conclude that: 'This surprising image of the British as a predominantly religious nation is in contrast to the received view of itself as secular.'⁹⁹

The comprehensiveness of the survey may have been open to dispute, what is significant however, was the appropriation of these results by the Church of England. The EVSSG study was directly quoted in the 1987 Anglican pamphlet *Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity* as proof of the 'strong moral and ethical tradition' within the nation.¹⁰⁰ Further evidence of a connection between sociological research into implicit religion and the Church's renewed sense of national purpose was also found in the work of sociologist Grace Davie who was hired by the *Faith in the City* commission to assess the nature of Christian belief in Britain especially in the inner cities. Davie concluded that, although urban centres were traditionally sites of secularity, there remained a latent Christian belief in the inner cities and the nation at large.¹⁰¹ Crucially she linked this 'residual Christianity' to the Church of England's distinct social purpose and relevance, proposing that the inner city clergy should not be 'beset by doubts about failure because the church remains empty on Sundays' for the local parish priest had a 'strategic role' in providing a 'bridge' in civil society.¹⁰²

Irrespective of whether Church leaders directly drew on this scholarship, the notion of a Christian nation was undoubtedly the predominant thinking amongst the Anglican leadership in this period, as Clifford Longley recognised:

Folk Religion is the general "C of E" religiosity of the masses.....The new fashion is to detect hitherto unseen virtues in it, particularly the *raison d'être* it gives the professional churchman. This relationship between the "C of E" majority and the Church of England minority is the new form of Establishment, the special tie between church and people that was once seen primarily in legal and constitutional bonds.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Halsey, 'On Methods and Morals' in Abrams et al., *Values and Social Change*, p.12.

⁹⁹ Clifford Longley, 'More Religious than we think', *The Times*, 27 April 1982.

¹⁰⁰ *Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity* (London, 1987), p.3. Professor A.H. Halsey and Prof. Rev. John Mahoney contributed to both the EVSSG and *Changing Britain*. See John Mahoney, 'Theological and Pastoral Reflections' in Abrams et al., *Values and Social Change*, pp.253-78.

¹⁰¹ *Faith in the City*, ch.3.

¹⁰² Grace Davie's report to the Commission is reprinted as Davie, 'The Nature of belief in the Inner City' in Geoffrey Ahern & Grace Davie, *Inner City God: the Nature of Belief in the Inner City* (London, 1987), p.63. Davie further elucidated on this theme in *Believing without Belonging* concluding that: 'Christian nominalism remains a more prevalent phenomenon than secularism' in modern Britain: Davie, *Believing without Belonging*, p.76

¹⁰³ Clifford Longley, 'The Closed Circuit of Converts', *The Times*, 15 February 1982.

The leading exponent of this reformulated understanding of establishment was the Archbishop of York who, in 1983, penned a book entitled *Church and Nation in a Secular Age* which attended to the issue of residual Christianity and its importance for the Church. Habgood contended that the contemporary struggle against secularism was not a new phenomenon nor was a division between a churchgoing and non-churchgoing mass, declaring that ‘active churchgoers form the top of a huge religious iceberg. There are simply the most visible and articulate part of a much more widespread phenomenon.’¹⁰⁴ Habgood affirmed that the Church needed to look upon the untapped and widespread prevalence of folk Christianity as a positive opportunity.¹⁰⁵ The task of the national Church therefore should be to welcome ‘those whose beliefs may seem inadequate’ and ‘those who seem merely to want to use it [the church] for their own convenience’ and attempt to nurture and strengthen this vestigial faith into a ‘fuller and more explicit Christian experience’.¹⁰⁶ Folk Christianity, according to Habgood therefore, may have been doctrinally confused and incoherent, but it was a genuine religious expression and more importantly evidence of the continual existence of Christian values in society and a reminder of the Church of England’s responsibilities to the nation as a whole.

This notion of a Christian nation was particular to the Church of England and one not shared by the Catholic or Nonconformist denominations, which did not make any claims to a broader constituency. This of course made it possible for the Church of England to assert that ‘folk religion’ was in essence a ‘folk Anglicanism’.¹⁰⁷ According to Clifford Longley, the English people’s modern casual relationship with faith was a continuation of the nation’s historic and evolving relationship with the Church of England. The English, in Longley’s view, had always rejected ‘dogma’ and shown ‘a certain ‘ambivalence’ towards the clergy and the Church.’¹⁰⁸ This attitude had continued in more secular times, with the populace maintaining certain expectations of the spiritual arm of the

¹⁰⁴ Habgood, *Church and Nation in a Secular Age*, p.78.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.78-92. Habgood had presented a similar argument in his enthronement sermon: ‘Public Faith’ Enthronement Sermon, 18 November 1983, reprinted in John Habgood, *Confessions of a Conservative Liberal* (London, 1988), pp.7-10.

¹⁰⁶ Habgood, *Church and Nation*, p.91.

¹⁰⁷ Kenneth Leech argues that the connection between the Church of England and mainstream English culture served as the chief justification for the continuation of establishment in all four Church reports produced in the twentieth century in 1917, 1935, 1952, 1970: Kenneth Leech, *Struggle in Babylon; Racism in the Cities and Churches of Britain* (London, 1988), p.139.

¹⁰⁸ Longley, *The Times*, 27 April 1982. For similar views on the relationship of the English people to religion, see also David Winter, *Battered Bride? The Body of Faith in an Age of Doubt* (Eastbourne, 1988).

state: 'The church is a place to stay away from, but on which they secretly depend, just as a rebellious adolescent needs to know his parents are still there.'¹⁰⁹

This vision of a Christian consensus espoused by Church leaders, however, was ultimately a position of defence than one of confidence. Despite Habgood's optimistic message on the potentialities of folk Christianity, clergymen remained fearful about depleting congregations, especially as figures revealed that the Church's increasing public profile had not triggered a reversal in its fortunes.¹¹⁰ According to radical cleric Rev. Kenneth Leech the understanding that 'the majority of the population, perhaps including the government, are basically "closet Christians" needing gentle persuasion,' was fundamentally wrong: 'It is not self-evident that the values of the gospel *are* common to society as a whole. Indeed the evidence to the contrary is considerable.'¹¹¹ Leech concluded that such a vision was unwise and unhelpful for both the Church and society:

Today the myth of a national Church, the religious arm of the nation, is blatant nonsense. Yet the Church of England clings to it as a way of 'influencing' the national scene.....Is the idea of 'influencing society', which seems to dominate the thinking of the report as it does many church statements, an adequate model for the Church's social witness?¹¹²

Leech was speaking as a Christian socialist, one who believed that the Church needed to remove itself from the structures of temporal power in order to become an effective political voice. He was not the only one, however, to question why the Church seemed to content to trade off the myth of a Christian nation rather than evangelising to make it a reality.¹¹³ The central problem, critics argued, was that the Church was assuming a public influence, which was no longer credible and that its self-appointed role as the 'conscience of the nation' was neither appropriate nor welcome. Theologian Duncan Forrester perhaps judged it correctly when he wrote that the concept of a Christian consensus revealed more about contemporary Anglican anxieties about secularity than about the state of faith within the nation.¹¹⁴

Public Anglicanism may have been an outdated and in some circles unwanted vision, but it was a purpose, which Anglican leaders believed in, took incredibly seriously

¹⁰⁹ Clifford Longley, 'New look at Religion and Society', *The Times*, 30 August 1976.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix I and II for figures on Anglican congregations in the 1980s.

¹¹¹ Leech, *Struggle in Babylon*, p.147-8. Emphasis is Leech's own.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.145-6.

¹¹³ Frank Field was equally sceptical of the Church's position: *The Politics of Paradise; a Christian Approach to the Kingdom* (London, 1987), ch.8.

¹¹⁴ Forrester, *Beliefs, Values and Policies*, p.42.

and one they demonstrated with a degree of integrity and moral weight. Crucially, the Anglican hierarchy did not think that they were imposing Christian ideas on a semi-Christian nation, rather, that an elucidation of widely-held Christian values would help forge a sense of unity at a time of intense national division. It was no accident therefore that the concept of public Anglicanism underwent a revival during the Thatcher decade. As John Habgood proclaimed at his enthronement sermon in 1983: 'Public faith' provided the values and aspirations of society and reflected a 'promise that beyond our separations as Christians, as people, as one nation in a divided world, there is an ultimate unity.'¹¹⁵

IV. Christian Community: The Church of England's Position in Civil Society

It was not only this notion of a Christian consensus which the Anglican hierarchy drew upon to sanction their role as public critics. The Church's presence in society through its parish system and voluntary organisations also carried much political weight and validated the Church's position. Speaking at the Lord's debate in the aftermath of the Brixton riots for example, Archbishop Runcie declared the right of the Church, as 'vital agents' in the community, to speak on behalf of the residents of Brixton. According to Runcie, the clergy, unlike policemen, social workers and other public servants, actually lived in the community they served and were therefore 'close to their fellow citizens in a way few other professionals are'.¹¹⁶ The Primate's comments were symptomatic of a renewed faith in the local parish as a 'vital agency' in communities. That the Church's parish network gave its leadership a unique perspective on social and economic developments was a claim made time and time again in the BSR's various policy submissions to government departments.¹¹⁷ Even those who disagreed with the Church's political position were willing to concede that its presence within communities was 'a qualification that no other national body has in anything like the same degree' and one which should ensure 'that the testimony of the Church of England is at least seriously listened to'.¹¹⁸ This proved particularly effective in the House of Lords where the Anglican bishops, as the only representatives in the second

¹¹⁵ 'Public Faith' Enthronement Sermon, 18 November 1983, reprinted in Habgood, *Confessions of a Conservative Liberal*, p.9.

¹¹⁶ *Parliamentary Proceedings*, House of Lords Debates, 4 February 1982, Vol.426, cols.1414-5.

¹¹⁷ See for example LPL, BSRP, SPC, 1984, BSR/SPC/M/2, Evidence submitted to the review on supplementary benefit, August 1984.

¹¹⁸ John Root, 'What sort of Nation?' in David Newman (ed.), *Taking on Faith in the City* (Nottingham, 1986), p.4.

chamber with an active constituency, drew upon the stories and experiences of their parishioners.¹¹⁹

For David Sheppard, the local operations of the Church's ministry were crucial and, although this had weakened in spiritual and worshipping terms, the very existence of parishes in urban areas remained hugely significant within a political context. 'However tenuously it may sometimes cling on, the Church has a presence in every community in the nation. We're there – and we know.....We possess knowledge which is very unpopular with some of those.....who insist that U.K Limited is prospering,' Sheppard boldly proclaimed in a lecture in 1989.¹²⁰ The aim of the parish, Sheppard contended, was to operate as a link between disparate groups within society and as a centre of resistance to injustice, apathy and despair.¹²¹ The Church's local and national purpose were thus entwined. Many believed that just as the Church's leadership could act as a source of unity on a national platform, so the parish could operate as a central bridge within communities.

It was not only the parish system, but also the Church's network of voluntary associations which lent much credibility and legitimacy to its political voice. The fact that during the 1980s many of these organisations worked in partnership with local and central government delivering services, meant that Church leaders talked knowingly about experiences on the ground, not least the failures of government employment and welfare programmes. It was important that the Church's social critique was rooted in reality for it meant that the clergy spoke from a position of specifics rather than just naïve compassion, making it all the more difficult to dismiss.

All of this was part of a broader reassertion of the *territorial* rather than a *congregational* understanding of Anglicanism in the 1980s. It was easy to reel out a long-list of the historic failures and contemporary flaws of the Church's urban ministry, and yet when seen in a civic rather than a spiritual light, the Church could legitimately claim (and did) that its local clergy were better informed, more intimately connected and less alienated from socially disenfranchised communities than the mechanisms of state. One of the reasons why *Faith in the City* proved such an illuminating document, therefore, was the way in which it had highlighted the breach between those in power and the powerless in society.

¹¹⁹ See for example *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 22 June 1981, Vol.421, cols.875-8; 7 July 1981, Vol.422, cols.591-3, 612-3. Out of all contributions made by bishops in the second chamber in the eighties, 28 per cent of these contained direct references to the bishop's diocesan or vocational experiences: Partington, *The Contribution*, p.209.

¹²⁰ LCA, SP, Publications Box I, Addresses 1986-1989, De Brabant Lecture, May 1989, p.2.

¹²¹ Sheppard, *Bias to the Poor*, esp. chs.1-10, 12.

The Church's emphasis on the importance of the local parish directly fed into the then widespread disillusionment with bureaucratic centralism. In the late 1970s, those on both sides of the political spectrum had complained that the impersonal and remote structures of state were failing to reach those in need and that a renewed emphasis on local-based service delivery was crucial.¹²² These concerns were symptomatic of a much deeper malaise. The rise of community politics, the campaign for proportional representation and the Welsh and Scottish nationalist movements were all manifestations of a much larger issue, namely the lack of accountability in Britain's democratic and governmental system. These debates continued and only intensified in the eighties as the Conservative government restricted union practises, reduced the power of local government and privatised public services. The Church, along with other non-governmental organisations, thus benefited from this culture of suspicion towards central government and associated fears regarding accountability and representation.

This positioning of the Church of England's clergy at the heart of the local community, well versed in the plight of the marginalised did not go unchallenged however. The claim that the parish priest, unlike most public servants, inhabited the place in which he ministered was of course technically true, yet as sociologist and theologian Robin Gill corrected: 'he [the clergyman] doesn't live in the council estate but in middle-class isolation'.¹²³ For all its honourable intentions of demonstrating a 'bias to the poor', the Church could not escape criticisms that it was predominantly a middle-class institution in both composition and outlook, and that its attitude towards the underprivileged was essentially an age-old paternalistic one. The right-wing clergyman Rev. Digby Anderson for example, commenting on the earnestness with which David Sheppard spoke about the poor, quipped: 'apparently the Bishop has his feet on the ground but in truth he is airborne'.¹²⁴ If Anderson was accusing Sheppard of being a tad naïve, then he was also striking at the heart of the Church's own insecurities, one which had plagued it since the nineteenth century; namely its failure to establish a strong presence amongst the urbanised working class and the limitations that came from being the established Church, part of the ruling elite.

¹²² Jane Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain* (Aldershot, 1995), esp. pp.124-148; Finlayson, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare*, pp.330-358. An analysis of the relationship between the Church and the welfare state will be given in chapter 3 of this thesis.

¹²³ Robin Gill, *Beyond Decline: a Challenge to the Churches* (London, 1988), p.114.

¹²⁴ 'Eating Sheppard's Pie: Hints on Reading the Sociological Gospel' in Digby Anderson (eds.), *The Kindness that Kills: The Churches' Simplistic Response to Complex Social Issues* (London, 1984), p.162.

Some Anglicans believed that it was precisely this 'Establishment' link and mindset which prevented the Anglican hierarchy from embracing a more radicalised model of Christian action. There was definite truth in these claims. And yet paradoxically, the Church's class bias, its association with the corridors of power and its non-radical credentials both guaranteed and undermined its credibility as a voice for the underprivileged in society. Calls for the Church to address its own institutional failures persisted throughout the decade however, with many accusing the Church bureaucracy of reflecting and perpetuating the very inequalities it was seeking to abolish.¹²⁵ This criticism had particular validity in respect to the issue of race, for although Church leaders had played a key role in denouncing the government's restrictive British Nationality Act of 1981, the Church's own record on racial integration at both a central and parochial level was decidedly less flattering.¹²⁶ Black Anglicans, despite being one of the most active Christian constituencies in Britain, were a marginalised group within the Church. This sense of alienation from Anglicanism had led many to set up their own independent black-led churches.¹²⁷ The *Faith in the City* commission had sought to address this problem by proposing that a Commission for Black Anglican Concerns be established. This proposal was defeated in the Synod, which led to accusations that there was an underlying institutional racism within the Church that seriously needed to be tackled.¹²⁸

Equally embarrassing was the Church's record on housing. As the third largest landowner in the country, with an extensive portfolio in many of England's city centres, Church leaders spoke from a platform of experience when it criticised the Thatcher government's cuts in the social housing budget. The Church, however, soon found that its own conduct as property owners was subject to scrutiny. One Conservative MP denounced the ecclesiastical landlords as 'worse than Rachman' when it was revealed that a Church-owned housing corporation in Paddington, London, had been sold off to a private investor for maximum profit.¹²⁹ Many of the decisions made by the Church Commissioners on the Church's behalf often directly contradicted and undermined the Anglican public position on both domestic and international affairs. And all too often this hypocrisy was publicly exposed. 'Truthfully, I find it rather embarrassing' stated one priest in a letter to David Sheppard in 1990 in response to a recently published article on Church property

¹²⁵ See for example Geoff Babb, 'The Political Economy of the Churches', CAPA, CAP newssheet, October/November 1983, p.4-5.

¹²⁶ A point made in *Faith in the City*, pp.95-100.

¹²⁷ See Appendix I for the growth of African and West Indian churches in Britain 1970-1985.

¹²⁸ The Synod vote was as follows: 197 in favour, 207 against, 17 abstentions: *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1986*, Vol.17, No.1, 6 February 1986, pp.257-65.

¹²⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 2 December 1985.

investments: ‘is there anything that the Commissioners can do to be part of taking the housing crisis seriously – and to be seen to be acting more in light of *Faith in the City*.’¹³⁰ Frank Field, writing to *The Times* soon after the publication of *Faith in the City*, argued that if the Church wanted to be taken seriously, it needed to demonstrate its own commitment to the inner cities, to ‘lead by example and not just with words’.¹³¹ The setting up of the Church Urban Fund (one of the recommendations in *Faith in the City*) in which Church Commissioners and individual dioceses donated monies towards Church-led urban initiatives, was an attempt to address this problem.¹³² For some however, such actions did not go far enough.

Far from being preoccupied with its institutional failures and declining worshipping numbers, the 1980s is marked by the way in which the Church leadership spoke in confident and assured terms of the Church’s role and responsibilities in a society which they deemed to be still shaped by Christian values. As the Archbishop of Canterbury explained in a speech in 1984:

I think the weaknesses of the Church can be exaggerated by those with a romantic view of its past, or ignorance of its present life. Diminished in numbers and distanced from Westminster, it is still the largest network of voluntary associations for social well-being in this country. Time and again it is this network, mostly staffed by the laity, that nudges the government. Above all, the Church still provides a nationwide meeting place for people of otherwise differing opinions to seek and find divine inspiration.¹³³

Quite how Anglican leaders were able to position public Anglicanism within an increasingly crowded and secularised public realm was a subject which also generated much thought and criticism and it is to this issue that this chapter now turns.

V. Articulating Christian values in a secular plural age

Anglican leaders may have attributed special importance to national Christian values and the privileged place of the Church of England in articulating these on the public stage, but this was always coupled with an acceptance of the secular and pluralist nature of British

¹³⁰ LCA, SP, Social Issues Box, Housing File, Letter from Rev. Alan Davis, 1 March 1990.

¹³¹ *The Times*, 13 December 1985.

¹³² *Faith in the City*, pp.161-5. See chapter 4 of this thesis for an analysis of the Church Urban Fund.

¹³³ Quoted in David Say, ‘Nudging the Government: Runcie and Public Affairs’, in S. Platten (ed.), *Runcie: On Reflection* (Norwich, 2002), p.33.

society.¹³⁴ From the 1960s, Anglican leaders had positively embraced multiculturalism and had been pro-active in promoting the cause of racial equality (even if the internal Church structures may not have been quite so welcoming).¹³⁵ Both the Anglican leadership and the British Council of Churches spoke out against racism and of the need for tolerance on every occasion Parliament sought to restrict immigration or when racial tensions boiled over in the inner cities.¹³⁶ In 1964, for example, Archbishop Ramsey was appointed by the Labour government to act as chairman of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants and, after coming out strongly against the 1968 Immigration Act, Ramsey became a target for the National Front. Within the Church, some traditionalist Anglicans were suspicious of this positive embracement of multiculturalism, which they viewed as an illustration of the Anglican hierarchy's predilection for trendy secular leftist ideals.¹³⁷ In the opinion of John Habgood, however, racial tolerance and social diversity were not exclusive to either secularism or socialism but values rooted in the Bible and upheld by the Church of England in the nineteenth century when it had helped accommodate the Catholic and Nonconformists communities.¹³⁸ Viewing the Victorian assimilation of religious minorities as the source of the pluralist tradition in British society was perhaps an 'airbrushed' version of history, yet Habgood was correct in characterising the modern Church of England as an institution which did not see other minorities, either racial or religious, as a threat to its dominance or its position as the established Church.

Just as the Anglican hierarchy welcomed the diversification of British society, so they also recognised that one of the by-products of this was an increasingly crowded public realm; one in which the Church would have to fight to be heard. In this way, its bishops, the BSR and associated Anglican pressure groups, acknowledged that they were one of many voices contributing to public discourse and discussion. The Church saw itself as offering a distinct Christian-moral perspective, but recognised that this contribution was most effective when the Church engaged with the language and specifics of secular politics. This outlook however, raised the fundamental issue about the presentation of theology as

¹³⁴ The sociologist Jose Casanova has noted that an acceptance of pluralism was a key facet of the re-emergence of religion in the public sphere: Casanova, *Public Religions*.

¹³⁵ The British Council of Churches were especially forthright in this regard, setting up the Community and Race Relations Unit (CRRU) in 1971, the Race Relations Projects Fund and publishing the report: *The New Black Presence in Britain: A Christian Scrutiny* (London, 1976).

¹³⁶ McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p.233; Edson Burton, 'From Assimilation to Anti-Racism: the Church of England's Response to Afro-Caribbean Migration 1948-1981' (PhD thesis, University of West of England, 2004); Kenneth Leech, 'The Church and Immigration and Race Relations Policy' in Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today*, pp.201-220.

¹³⁷ Rachel Tingle, *Another Gospel?*, p.31-8.

¹³⁸ Habgood, *Church and Nation*.

rational discourse. But as the Bishop of Manchester explained in a letter in 1985 to Conservative Anglican MP, John Gummer:

Where the misunderstanding comes I think is that the public imagine that when bishops speak, they do not expect to be contradicted and they are speaking in a sense *ex cathedra* in their own view. From my knowledge of my colleagues, I do not believe this to be true. I think we regard ourselves as taking part in the whole process of public debate, but hopefully doing so out of a deep concern for the moral and spiritual issues in the light of our own knowledge of Christian faith....To put them [bishops] on a pedestal is simply to detach them further from ordinary life.¹³⁹

The prelate's letter had been in response to a lecture given by John Gummer in which the Conservative minister had argued that spiritual leaders could not offer any enlightened insights into the political questions of the day.¹⁴⁰ Gummer reasserted that theology was not a matter for political dialogue and something open for discussion, but fundamental truths which should be proclaimed, not least by the spiritual guardians of the nation's faith.¹⁴¹ This dichotomy on the nature of theology and its fusion with politics would prove to be a major bone of contention between liberal Anglicans and the New Right.

Anglican leaders however did not envision themselves as simply political animals engaging in debate, but more specifically providing a focus for unity in an era increasingly characterised by fragmentation and conflict. There was little doubt that the crises of the late 1970s and the social and economic polarities of the early 1980s had precipitated a loss of confidence in the collective ethos of the nation. The Church, however, saw itself as taking up this mantle by providing the language of consensus and solidarity in an era of national confusion. As the Archbishop of York explained:

Social cohesion and national unity depend on invisible struts and beams, many of which have a strong moral component. Though built into the structure of national life, they cannot be assumed to retain their strength without constant reinforcement. And this is one level on which churches, and no doubt other bodies as well, have an important contribution to make. Unless they make it, the nation could in the end

¹³⁹ MCL, BCP, Z files, 2/03 Politics and Christianity, Letter to John Gummer MP, 7 January 1985. On the particular point about theology see John A. Williams, 'A Bishop should speak out, but what can he say? Secularisation, Establishment and the Voice of the Church', *Crucible*, (January-March 1985), pp.15-22; Forrester, *Beliefs, Values and Policies*; Hugh Montefiore, *Christianity and Politics* (Basingstoke, 1990).

¹⁴⁰ Copy of John Gummer's address located in MCL, BCP, Z files, 2/03 Politics and Christianity.

¹⁴¹ Gummer's address was chiefly directed at the Bishop of Durham's comments on the Virgin Birth and the miracles of Jesus.

find itself living in a very different kind of house, or even in a row of separate bungalows.¹⁴²

In an era when gender, racial, political and social divisions were acute, Habgood was promoting the churches as a key social glue; one of the chief ‘means’ by which unitary ‘social values’ could be ‘generated and transmitted’. One of the striking features of liberal theological discourse in the 1980s was a reassertion of the Church and Christian values as a source of national consensus. For Habgood, there were at least four ways in which the churches were able to contribute to society and the public realm: firstly, the parishes and network of charities should serve as the bedrock of the nation’s associational culture; secondly, the churches must operate as articulators of national principles; thirdly, they should encourage the British people’s continual adherence to Christianity; and finally, as a ‘cement in society’ in order to help maintain national unity.¹⁴³ This vision was formalised four years later in a pamphlet *Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity* by a commission headed by Habgood himself.¹⁴⁴ On the ‘particular vocation’ of the established Church, it affirmed its obligation to ‘articulate national values’ and to aim for:

breadth of vision, the ability to handle complexity and to live with polarities, moral concern rooted in basic principles rather than detailed prescriptions, wide pastoral contacts and commitments, a recognised place both in the voluntary sector and as an integral part of national life, a sense of responsibility for the whole nation constantly tempered by broader international and religious perspectives, a realistic appraisal of our human capacity to deceive ourselves and serve our own interests, a message of hope in the face of failure, cynicism and despair.¹⁴⁵

The fact that Habgood’s analysis had emphasised the contribution of all Christian denominations in Britain rather than exclusively the Church of England is an illustration of the ecumenical mindset of Anglican clergymen in the 1980s. In truth, a belief in the privileged role of the Church of England as the purveyor of values went hand in hand with an understanding that the churches were most effective when they operated in unison.

The ecumenical movement had come a long way since its birth in the interwar years. Relations between Protestant denominations in Britain had been solidified with the formation of the British Council of Churches (BCC), while this relationship had also found

¹⁴² Habgood, *Church and Nation*, p.63.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.49.

¹⁴⁴ *Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity* (London, 1987).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.66-7.

an international footing with the establishment of the World Council of Churches (WCC).¹⁴⁶ Anglicans had taken a considerable lead in both organisations and in respect to the former, the BCC, had provided most of its funds. Some Anglican traditionalists became distinctly wary of the ecumenical movement, particularly its increasingly political involvement. The WCC's Programme to Combat Racism established in 1968, garnered much criticism, especially when it was disclosed that it supported organisations involved in direct political action. Whilst the Catholic Church was not a member of BCC, relations between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism also prospered in this period. The 1970s saw the setting up of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). This was a decade-long project designed to establish areas of common ground and to bring the two churches closer together in worship and doctrine.¹⁴⁷ Ecumenical initiatives were not confined to central organisations but extended (and in many ways proved more fruitful) in the local context, with the uniting of charitable and welfare activities, the sharing of church buildings, and in some cases, joint worship. The involvement of leading figures from Britain's Christian churches at national religious services had become the norm by the 1980s. The participation of the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Cardinal at the enthronement ceremony for Archbishop Runcie in 1980 was testimony to the strength of ecumenicalism and the acceptance that all Christian denominations, especially the Roman Catholic Church, were an important facet of British religious life.

The eminent sociologist Bryan Wilson has argued that the forging of closer relations between denominations reflected a desire for consolidation and Christian unity against encroaching secularism.¹⁴⁸ This is no doubt true, yet it also represented the dissipation of age-old tensions and a genuine willingness to work and worship together.¹⁴⁹ The generation of Anglican clergy who were at the helm in the 1980s, had spent their formative years working within an ecumenical environment and this had instilled a broadly Christian rather than narrow denominational outlook.¹⁵⁰ Not all Anglicans shared this enthusiasm for greater ecumenical links.¹⁵¹ As the Church of England formed ever-close relationships with

¹⁴⁶ Welsby, *A History of the Church*; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, chs. 5, 18, 39-40.

¹⁴⁷ Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp.569-71, pp.645-8.

¹⁴⁸ Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society; a sociological comment* (London, 1966); Alan D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain*, pp.125-130.

¹⁴⁹ For a neat summary of ecumenicalism in the 1980s, see Davie, *Believing without Belonging*, pp.163-167.

¹⁵⁰ Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics*, pp.101-2.

¹⁵¹ Bernard Smith, *The Fraudulent Gospel: Politics and the World Council of Churches* (Surrey, 1979). Conservative evangelical Rachel Tingle believed that ecumenicalism and the WCC was a sign that the

both its Nonconformist and Catholic partners, this prompted a backlash from both hard-line evangelicals and high-Anglicans. While the former were convinced that closer unity with Roman Catholicism threatened the Church of England's Protestant foundations, high-Anglicans, on the other hand, feared that any fixed settlement between the Protestant denominations undermined the Anglican's links with Rome. In 1982, for example, the proposed Covenant between Anglicanism and the Free Churches was defeated in the Synod in a concerted effort by a group of disgruntled anglo-catholics.¹⁵² All of this meant that ecumenicalism was more often than not a cause of division rather than unity within the Anglican ranks.

Relations between denominations may have been the cause of friction within Anglicanism, yet in many respects, ecumenicalism enhanced rather than undermined the public position of the Church of England. The break-up of traditional religio-political allegiances in the interwar period and the subsequent advances made in the postwar years enabled the Church of England, in the words of historian S.J.D. Green, to enjoy 'a spiritual superiority over all other churches, and a confident sense of its growing political, social and even intellectual claim to a place in the mainstream of national life'.¹⁵³ Green contends that this remained the case even after the upheavals of the 1960s, whereby the Church of England emerged as the spokesperson and figurehead for Christianity in British public life.¹⁵⁴ This was certainly how it was treated by the media and even in Westminster, where the Lords Spiritual were considered as representatives of Christianity and not simply the Church of England. This was reinforced by the fact that the bishops would often state that their position was the 'Christian' rather than specifically 'Anglican' perspective on an issue.¹⁵⁵ The demise of Nonconformity, the strength of cooperation between churches as well as the declining influence of all institutional Christianity, meant that the Church of

churches had replaced 'traditional Christian missionary activity' with 'political action designed to establish a new kind of world order.': Tingle, *Another Gospel?*, p.29.

¹⁵² Hastings, *A History of Christianity*, p.xxxiii.

¹⁵³ S.J.D. Green, 'Survival and Autonomy: on the strange fortunes and peculiar legacy of ecclesiastical establishment in the modern British state c.1920 to the present day' in S.J.D. Green & R.C. Whiting, (eds.), *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), p.312, p.315.

¹⁵⁴ This was particular in the realm of politics, less so on issues of sexual ethics where the denominational positions were more distinct, especially the Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁵⁵ BSR Chairman Giles Ecclestone argued that, although the ecumenical movement was crucial to the Church of England, there remained a distinctive 'Anglican voice': *The Church of England and Politics*, p.7.

England was *inter par pares* in respect to other main Christian denominations and could confidently claim to be the spiritual focus for the nation.¹⁵⁶

*

Breaking free from the culture of introspection of the 1970s emerged a Church which was more outward looking, politicised and confident in the contribution it could make to public debate, yet also wary that its place within a secular pluralised public realm needed to be negotiated rather than simply assumed. Accompanying this was a tendency to see itself, quite justifiably, as the public representatives of the latent Christianity amongst the populace. The understanding of the established Church as the articulator of nominal Christianity and as a force within the local community was a vision, however, that could have only emerged out of the crisis in socio-democratic consensus of the seventies and the political polarities of the 1980s. How the Church responded to this situation and specificities of the Church's political position is the subject to which this thesis now turns

¹⁵⁶ See the epilogue of this thesis for a full exposition of where Anglicanism stood in relation to non-Christian faiths.

CHAPTER THREE

Statements of Faith: The Christian response to Thatcherism

If we truly believe that we are all members of one Body then we have a responsibility to show that we are prepared to share our personal wealth.' *Faith in the City*, 1985.¹

'If the incarnation were to take place today Jesus would exercise his ministry in places like Netherley and Toxteth.' David Sheppard, Liverpool Diocesan Synod, 1987.²

'in the midst of extreme affluence and plenty it is more than a political disgrace; it is a confessional matter going to the heart of what we believe about God and his purposes.'
Church Action on Poverty statement, Winchester Diocesan Newsletter, 1989.³

No publication or event in the 1980s better reflects the Church's social witness than the 1985 *Faith in the City* report into urban poverty. Political surveys and Church histories chronicling this decade routinely point to it as the defining moment in the Church's prophetic ministry.⁴ As this chapter will reveal, *Faith in the City* was not an isolated episode, but was simply one aspect of a much broader Anglican engagement with the economic and social agenda of the 1980s. Here, *Faith in the City* will be viewed alongside publications from the BSR, speeches and sermons by the bishops, writings by theologians and Christian commentators and debates in the Synod in an effort to ascertain the Anglican position on four key themes: poverty, welfare, industrial relations and wealth creation. The picture that emerges is of a response which was firmly rooted in the Anglican liberal tradition and the Church's historic connection with the postwar settlement, but also one which grew out of an intellectual engagement with contemporary sociological literature, models of political theology and perhaps most important of all, the specific political culture of Thatcherism. It was a position where the pastoral was connected to the prophetic, whereby the work and activities of the local parish and Christian charities were integral in shaping the Church's social witness. In some cases, it involved direct political negotiation (like during the miners' strike), in others it concerned the promotion of specific policies (in respect to social security and taxation) but, more often than not, it involved the language of generalities, namely Christian values, which the Church believed should direct political choices. Underlying this

¹ *Faith in the City*, p.259.

² LCA, SP, UPA Box, *Faith in the City* file Speech to the Liverpool Diocesan Synod, March 1987

³ *Winchester Churchman*, No.317, August 1989, p.5.

⁴ Adrian Hastings considers that *Faith in the City* ranks alongside Pope John Paul's visit in 1982 as the most important event in postwar Church history: Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p.xxxviii. For a similar judgment see Young, *One of Us*, pp.416-8; Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, p.390.

was a cohesive understanding of society, which linked the poor with the affluent, the priest with his community and the established Church with the nation.

The majority of the Church's energy and efforts were directed at countering the ethos and policies of Thatcherism.⁵ Scholars have since questioned whether Thatcherism was a coherent ideological project, rightly pointing to the way in which the government could be philosophically inconsistent and overwhelmingly pragmatic. Yet for the Church, the tendency was to see the government as pursuing a coherent vision which represented a complete break with the postwar years of consensual politics. Much of the exchange was therefore framed around the specifics of Thatcherism, yet the Church's social critique was also in response to broader fears, including the loss of national confidence in the wake of decolonisation and de-industrialisation, increasing diversity and individualism, and the crisis in social democracy; concerns that Mrs Thatcher capitalised on rather than created. Anglican emphasis also changed with the times. In the first half of the decade Church leaders focused on the problems of poverty and unemployment and the related issues of industrial strife and public sector reform. As the 'Thatcher Boom' began to take hold in the latter part of the decade, so Anglicans shifted their attention to critiquing materialism and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Taking a thematic approach and broken down into four sub-headings, this chapter will seek to sketch out not only the precise contribution of the Church but also the political, theological and sociological origins of this stance.

I. Poverty in Thatcher's Britain

The series of political and economic crises that had afflicted Britain from the late 1970s triggered what could be termed a 'state of the nation debate', whereby politicians, academics and commentators were all engaged in a discussion about which direction the country should take. Even in the early 1980s, it was not evident that the politically vulnerable Mrs Thatcher had all the answers, only that there were grievous questions to be faced. As the social ramifications of widespread unemployment and economic recession were laid bare through rising dole queues, inner city rioting and strikes, the issue of urban poverty became a particular concern for the political elite. The publication of Peter Townsend's *Poverty in the UK* in 1979 and the Black report on *Inequalities in Health* in 1980, as well as TV documentaries such as *Breadline Britain*, all pointed to the widespread social deprivation in a

⁵ The Church of England tended to use the term 'New Right' and the 'Conservative government', although 'Thatcherism' was also sometimes used.

nation undergoing harsh economic change.⁶ These concerns were only to intensify as the Conservative government pursued its policy 'of rolling back the state' by cutting social service budgets and refusing to bail out failing industries to protect jobs. By the early eighties unemployment stood at three million while an estimated 8.6 million were living on supplementary benefit, a rise of 60 per cent between 1979-1983.⁷

The urban riots of 1981 revealed how easy it was for these tensions to boil over into violence especially with the additional grievance of police harassment galvanising Britain's Afro-Caribbean community. The spring and summer of that year witnessed the most serious rioting in mainland UK in the twentieth century. The Brixton riots in April were followed in July with major disturbances in Liverpool, Bristol and Manchester. And on the 10th of that month, known as 'Britain's night of anarchy', violence had spread to Southall, Birmingham, Preston, Wolverhampton, Hull, Ellesmere Port, Reading and Chester. The newspapers were awash with images of blazing fires, aggressive youths lobbing petrol bombs and injured defenceless policemen, as the government publicly dismissed the insurgents as a collection of hooligans, looters and Marxist agitators.⁸ Nonetheless, the Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw, convinced that the specific issue of police-community relations in Brixton needed to be addressed appointed a commission, headed by Lord Scarman to look into the issue. The Labour party had called for the remit of the report to be broadened, but in the end its focus was confined to police conduct and only lightly touched on the underlying tensions such as youth unemployment, which in areas such as Brixton was estimated to be over 60 per cent.⁹

From the windows of Lambeth Palace the Archbishop of Canterbury could see the fires of Brixton raging and nowhere did the discussions about the urban disturbances assume more importance than in the Church of England. At a local level, priests attempted to act as reconcilers to ease tensions; the Anglican parish of St Matthew's Brixton and the local Council of Churches for example, played a pivotal role in restoring trust within the community between the Afro-Caribbean population and police.¹⁰ In Liverpool, David Sheppard, and Catholic Archbishop Derek Worlock, demonstrated their commitment in

⁶ Peter Townsend, *Poverty in the UK* (Harmondsworth, 1979); *Inequalities in Health: Black Report* (Harmondsworth, 1982); *Breadline Britain* (LWT, 1983); Beatrix Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the Eighties* (London, 1984); Paul Harrison, *Inside the Inner City Life under the Cutting Edge* (Harmondsworth, 1983).

⁷ Joanna Mack & Stewart Lansley, *Poor Britain* (London, 1985), p.7. Supplementary Benefit served as the government measure for the poverty line.

⁸ Leech, *Struggle in Babylon*, ch.6.

⁹ Figures for black unemployment were estimated, as ethnicity was then not classified in the official statistics.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 16 April 1981.

practical terms (establishing a Law Centre in Toxteth) and also in prophetic terms, by dispelling the characterisation of the rioters as trouble-makers and asserting the legitimacy of the revolt as a response by those bearing the brunt of de-industrialisation.¹¹ Writing in the aftermath of the riots, Worlock considered he was 'almost the only non-political voice which can be raised at the moment and people appear to be listening.'¹² The newly appointed government 'Minister for Merseyside', Michael Heseltine sought to draw on the knowledge and expertise of the churches in Liverpool, meeting with the two leaders on several occasions. After one such gathering, Heseltine wrote a letter of thanks to Worlock:

The meeting that I had with you and the other church leaders was one which I found extremely valuable because the views expressed were among the most disinterested which I heard, while being based on well founded information and a clear view of the problems and the needs of the area.¹³

Heseltine's sentiments were genuine as fruitful relations between the government's Merseyside Task Force and the two spiritual leaders of the City would subsequently prove.¹⁴

The sense of social crisis felt in the aftermath of the riots however prompted the Church of England hierarchy to ponder whether it could or should be doing more in the inner cities. This topic became even more pressing when CA Director Rev. Eric James wrote a letter to *The Times* highly critical of the Church which he deemed was in danger of retreating to suburbia and abandoning its responsibilities in the inner cities where it was needed most.¹⁵ It was under these circumstances then that the Archbishop of Canterbury agreed to set up the *Faith in the City* commission. Made up of both lay and ecclesiastical figures, appointees included a head teacher, a trade union representative, the deputy leader of Sheffield City Council, professors of Sociology and Industrial Economics and two urban bishops.¹⁶ Anglican lay-member Richard O'Brien, who had recently been sacked as head of the MSC by Norman Tebbit, was appointed its chairman.¹⁷ Following in the footsteps of

¹¹ For an insight into the role of Derek Worlock and David Sheppard during the riots: Metropolitan Cathedral Archive, Worlock Papers, Series 13, Box X, A Toxteth riots; LCA, SP, Race Issues Box.

¹² MCA, WP, Series 13, Box X, A Toxteth Riots, Letter to Frank Judd, 11 July 1981.

¹³ Ibid., Letter from Michael Heseltine, 19 August 1981.

¹⁴ LCA, SP, Liverpool Box, Merseyside Development Corporation file, International Garden Festival file; MCA, WP, Series 13, Box X, A Toxteth riots.

¹⁵ *The Times*, 27 May 1981; David Sheppard, *Steps Along Hope Street: My Life in Cricket, the Church and the Inner City* (London, 2002), pp.241-254.

¹⁶ The Commission also included John Atherton of the William Temple Foundation, Eric James of Christian Action, Michael Eastman of ECUM, Graham Howes of Lambeth Palace and John Gladwin, Secretary of the BSR.

¹⁷ Norman Tebbit later said of O'Brien: 'he was not my man, nor a man for the times': Norman Tebbit, *Upwardly Mobile* (London, 1988), p.184.

Rowntree and Booth, the commission went ‘slumming’, staying in over thirty towns and cities across England, holding public meetings and listening to clergy, community leaders and residents of the inner cities.¹⁸ The purpose of this, as the commissioners explained, was ‘to see for ourselves the human reality behind the official statistics.’¹⁹ This ‘reality’ was vividly set out in the final document, which described ‘the shabby streets, neglected houses, sordid demolition sites of the inner city.....obscured by the busy shopping precincts of mass consumption.’²⁰

While it was admitted that the decline of Britain’s cities had long-term origins, the commission held back from fundamentally questioning the philosophy behind the large-scale public spending of the postwar years, and instead focused on the ethos and policies of the Thatcher administration. The incumbent government’s emphasis on the market, its commitment to low taxation, cuts in welfare and housing, as well as its decision to prioritise inflation over jobs were all subjected to moral scrutiny. The dominant picture painted in the report was of a ‘two nations’ Britain, whereby social and economic changes had disproportionately hit the poor whose fate was being compounded by the Conservative government’s supposed blind ideological investment in the free-market. The report concluded by offering twenty-three recommendations to the government including a revision of the taxation and social security system, job creation schemes and increased funding for local councils and central urban programmes. The commission also presented an honest and somewhat unflattering account of the Church’s urban ministry and put forward thirty-eight suggestions for its improvement, including the establishment of a Church Urban Fund to target resources to deprived parishes, a Commission for Black Anglican Concerns and greater assistance and training for urban clergy and its non-stipendiary support.²¹ This critique of the Church’s own state of affairs was important, for in the words of BSR Chairman John Gladwin, it avoided the impression that the commission was ‘throwing choice bricks at government from behind its well-defended walls of piety.’²²

Writing in 1987, Labour MP Frank Field judged *Faith in the City* to be a ‘first-class piece of work’ but one which ‘could have been produced by any group of well-intentioned individuals’. ‘What should have made it special’, he opined, ‘was its theology.....The report,

¹⁸ In addition to their own observations, the Commission also received nearly 300 written testimonies from various individuals, voluntary bodies and government agencies working in urban areas.

¹⁹ *Faith in the City*, p.xiv.

²⁰ *Faith in the City*, p.21.

²¹ The full list of recommendations are given in Appendix V.

²² John Gladwin, ‘Faith in the City’, *Crucible*, (January-March 1986), p.6.

for example, begins, not with an appropriate scriptural reference, but with a reference to a Government white paper.²³ Field was not the only one to question the coherence, motivation and logic of the Church's political theology during these years. Some felt it lacked doctrinal cogency, while others suspected that it was politically rather than divinely inspired.²⁴ Church leaders persistently claimed that their position was rooted in a 'theology of the poor', yet to what extent was this true and is it possible to detect any other influences at play?

The *Faith in the City* document owed a great deal to a sociological understanding of relative poverty. This was a theory that social deprivation should not be measured in 'absolute' terms such as nutrition or income, but in relative terms, of what was deemed acceptable living standards in a particular society.²⁵ This approach was explicitly adopted in the *Faith in the City* report, as the commission made clear: 'Poverty is not only about shortage of money. It is about rights and relationships; about how people are treated and how they regard themselves; about powerlessness, exclusion and loss of dignity'.²⁶ Given that sociologists A.H. Hasley and Ray Pahl were members of the *Faith in the City* commission it is perhaps not surprising that the document displayed such influences. This, however, was just one example of the deployment of sociological theories of poverty, citizenship and power in Anglican literature. The appropriation of these ideas by theologians and clergymen generated much criticism from those in conservative quarters who deemed it as a further indication of the increasing secularisation of Christian thought.²⁷ In truth, clergymen drew on this literature in order to expand and contemporise historic notions of Christian compassion and social concern. Moreover, the cross fertilisation between theology and sociology was not a recent phenomenon, its roots dated back to the first half of the twentieth century and was embodied in the figure of R.H. Tawney who was hugely influential in shaping both disciplines. Peter Townsend acknowledged as much in a speech in 1985, when he praised the Church for adopting a 'socially orientated meaning of poverty', which was entirely appropriate given that the sociological values of 'equality of treatment and equality of respect' had emanated from Christian principles.²⁸

²³ Field, *The Politics of Paradise*, p.114.

²⁴ Nigel Biggar, *Theological Politics: A Critique of 'Faith in the City'* (Oxford, 1988); Anthony Harvey (ed.), *Theology in the City: A Theological Response to Faith in the City* (London, 1989).

²⁵ Townsend, *Poverty in the UK* (Harmondsworth, 1979); Peter Alcock, *Poverty and State Support* (London, 1987), ch.1.

²⁶ *Faith in the City*, p.195.

²⁷ For a critical view see Anderson, 'Eating Sheppard's Pie', pp.157-169; Raymond Plant, 'The Anglican Church and the Secular State' in Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today* (London, 1985), p.328-9.

²⁸ Peter Townsend, 'Poverty, Power and Community', Proceedings of 'Poverty Today', Occasional paper No.7, (Edinburgh, 1986), p.6.

This harnessing of a relative theory of poverty to Christian notions of fellowship reflected a desire to move beyond traditional concepts of paternalism and charity. For as the Rev. John Atherton, author of *The Scandal of Poverty* recognised, a theology of the poor must concern the rights of citizenship and not just a Christian compassion for the hungry or needy.²⁹ The shift to an interrelated concept of poverty meant locating the fate of the underprivileged in the context of the affluent, or in the words of Atherton, understanding why ‘Etons and Harley Streets will always mean Liverpool 8s and Grunwicks’.³⁰

This was especially salient at a time when images of ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ poverty were juxtaposed in the public consciousness with unemployment and social deprivation at home and famine in the developing world. As the commission explained:

Poor people in Britain are not of course as poor as those in the Third World. But their poverty is real enough nonetheless. For poverty is a relative, as well as an absolute, concept. It exists, even in a relatively rich Western society, if people are denied access to what is generally regarded as a reasonable standard and quality of life.³¹

Given that the Thatcher government tended to cite the example of ‘real’ poverty in the developing world as evidence that poverty no longer existed in Britain, the distinction in *Faith in the City* was therefore an important one.³² It was especially resonant within a Christian context, for as *Church Times* journalist Patrick Duggan pointed out, *Faith in the City* would prove a wake-up call for the Christian community which, in more recent times, had unduly directed its Christian concerns abroad: ‘It is ironic’, he stated, ‘that Christians and non-Christians who have given generous support to charitable and religious organisations like Oxfam and Christian Aid, have remained oblivious to the impoverishment of whole communities barely a few miles away from their own homes.’³³ *Faith in the City* therefore succeeded in presenting relative poverty in Britain as a pressing moral challenge that demanded attention from both the government and the public.

Many traditionalist Anglicans however, deemed the *Faith in the City* report as a testament to the infiltration of radical Marxist theology in the Church. It was no accident

²⁹ John Atherton, *The Scandal of Poverty: Priorities for an Emerging Church* (London, 1983). See also the report produced by the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland: Duncan B. Forrester & Danus Skene, (eds.), *Just Sharing: A Christian Approach to the Distribution of Wealth, income and benefits* (Edinburgh, 1988).

³⁰ Atherton was referencing R.H. Tawney’s infamous phrase: ‘What thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thoughtful poor people call with equal justice a problem of riches’: R.H Tawney, Inaugural Lecture, *Poverty as an Industrial Problem* (London, 1913).

³¹ *Faith in the City*, p.195.

³² See John Moore, *End of the Line for Poverty* (London, 1989).

³³ *Church Times*, 6 December 1985.

that an unnamed cabinet minister had labelled the document as ‘pure Marxist theology’ when it was published.³⁴ This was an act of political scaremongering designed to fuel Anglican fears about the radicalisation of their Church rather than an accurate description of its theology.³⁵ In truth, neither *Faith in the City*, nor much else that emerged from the Church during this period, demonstrated any significant debt to liberation theology. Certainly there were some radical clergy, such as those who belonged to the Christian Organisations for Social, Political and Economic Change (COSPEC) network, who believed that this strand of theology offered both the Church and the proletariat salvation from secular oppression, yet COSPEC remained very much a fringe element.³⁶ Mainstream Anglicanism did however appropriate some of the language and emphasis of liberation theology. The term ‘bias to the poor’ was widely used for example, yet this was because it was a convenient tag line, which summed up the Church’s renewed focus, rather than a reflection of a deep-rooted investment in the principles of liberation theology. David Sheppard was one such bishop who drew upon this language, even naming one of his books *Bias to the Poor*. As he explained, the phrase neatly articulated the challenge that poverty posed to the Church and dismissed outright its Marxist implications.³⁷ The prevailing view amongst the Anglican elite was that liberation theology was uniquely tied to the particular circumstances and politics of South America, and of limited validity to the situation in Britain. As Rev. Anthony Harvey, theological consultant on the *Faith in the City* report later surmised, liberation theology acted as ‘an illustration rather than a motivation’ for social Anglicanism in the 1980s.³⁸

Much more prevalent was an emphasis on the non-partisan discourse of community and citizenship and a reaffirmation of ‘one-nation’ bound in Christian unity and fellowship. Theoretical notions of equality and social justice therefore were always justified in terms of being of universal benefit for the commonwealth of the nation. Addressing the Synod in 1984 during a debate on the morality of economics, the Archbishop of York, for example, believed that the ‘real moral heart of just distribution’ and ‘equality’ concerned the ‘common good’; a Christian notion of citizenship which called upon all to ‘contribute rather

³⁴ Norman Tebbit was believed to be the undisclosed cabinet member.

³⁵ Rachel Tingle, *Another Gospel?*; Norman, *Christianity and the World Order*.

³⁶ *COSPEC Newsletter*, 1981-1990. COSPEC was a radical collective of affiliated Christian organisations. This body is of interest chiefly because its outlook reveals the moderateness of mainstream Anglican opinion.

³⁷ David Sheppard, *Bias to the Poor*, ch.9. Sheppard always stressed his moderate credentials, arguing that his statements were in line with mainstream Christianity.

³⁸ Anthony Harvey, unpublished transcript of Centre for Contemporary British History witness seminar, *Faith in the City*, (July 2005), p.11.

than participate in society'.³⁹ This sentiment was echoed in the same debate by the Bishop of Lincoln who argued that the Church had a duty to highlight the plight of those 'alienated from confidence in the common weal'.⁴⁰ This was a discourse, which traced its lineage back to Temple and specifically positioned the wellbeing of the poor as central to national harmony and stressed the interrelationship between classes rather than the Marxist notion of the isolated proletariat.⁴¹

It has already been noted that one of the key aims of Christian social thought in the 1980s was to abandon a paternalistic and moralistic mould of Christian charity and to adopt a more robust notion of Christian social concern based on the values of equality and social justice. This was a plea made time and time again by theologians, activists and Synod members such as the Dean of Bristol who in 1984 spoke on behalf of many of his fellow Anglicans when he affirmed: 'What is needed of us I believe, both as a Church and as Christian individuals, is a real solidarity with the poor that goes beyond general benevolence or even sacrificial giving. We need a kind of Christian style of life which recognises the structural relationship between our affluence and their poverty.'⁴² This reflected an age-old fear about the patronising nature of Christian charity, but also a genuine desire for the Church to renew its social purpose and theology at a time when the poor were being increasingly marginalised in Thatcher's Britain. This ambition – to break free from paternalistic discourses of poverty – proved decidedly difficult to achieve however. In *Faith in the City*, for example, the 'poor' operated as the subject of the discussion rather than the target audience:

by any standards theirs is a wretched condition which none of us would wish to tolerate for ourselves or to see inflicted on others.They are trapped in housing and in environments over which they have little control. They lack the means and opportunity – which so many of us take for granted.⁴³

Here the distinction between 'us', (the affluent) and 'them', underlies how the poor were not seen as actors in their own emancipation and that the possibilities for change lay firmly

³⁹ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1984*, Vol.15, No.3, 14 November 1984, p.1007.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.993.

⁴¹ This language was adopted by those within the institutional structures of the Church such as the bishops and the BSR. Pressure groups such as CAP advanced more radical approaches of political theology.

⁴² *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1984*, Vol.15, No.3, 15 November 1984, p.1163.

⁴³ *Faith in the City*, p.xv.

in the hands of affluent Britain.⁴⁴ This outlook was also evident in the remarks by Prof. John Pickering, member of the commission, during the Synod debate on the report: 'it is in our hands, our hands as managers, as union members, as educators, as members of voluntary associations, indeed as ordinary citizens' to influence the political direction of debate.⁴⁵ It was not evident therefore that the Church had successfully established a theology which demonstrated a 'solidarity with the poor' and it was thus easy to dismiss *Faith in the City*, as many did, as yet another exercise in the long history of 'elite spectatorship'.⁴⁶

It must be understood however, that the main purpose in all this was to counter New Right's conceptualisation of poverty and dependency culture. During the 1970s, those on the Right, influenced by social theorists in America, had begun to argue that state support indirectly fostered a cyclical and debilitating form of poverty, which exacerbated rather than relieved the problem.⁴⁷ These ideas became mainstream with the election of the Thatcher government where traditional Tory-paternalism was replaced with a belief that a reinvigoration of self-responsibility rather than extension of welfare was the best means of achieving social mobility. The Church saw its central task as challenging Thatcherite individualism by reinforcing the collective Christian obligation of society. Thus Anglican leaders could be seen publicly countering the government's denigration of strikers, welfare claimants and rioters by presenting them as citizens with legitimate grievances. In this way, the Church did act as an important mouthpiece for the underprivileged and voiceless in society, even if this operated on a representative rather than empowering level. As Paul Skirrow admitted during the proceedings of the national CAP conference in 1987: 'The Church will never be the voice of the poor; but with its continual influence and access to power.... can still be a voice for the poor, speaking to the nation's conscience.'⁴⁸ *Faith in the City* succeeded in doing just this, for unlike the Scarman Report, it uncovered the widespread social deprivation that prevailed in urban areas with high unemployment. While its empirical observations were important, what made it stand out was the way in which it

⁴⁴ Sheridan Gilley argues that there was a similar tension in the Victorian Christian socialist movement: Sheridan Gilley, 'The Church of England in the Nineteenth Century', p.304.

⁴⁵ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1986*, Vol.17, No.1, 6 February 1986, p.227.

⁴⁶ Historian Seth Koven sees *Faith in the City* as a conscious break from the Victorian tradition of 'slumming', citing the way in which the Commission did not offer a moralistic condemnation of those that lived in slums nor did they view them as sexual objects as their Victorian predecessors had done: *Slumming Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, 2004), p.374.

⁴⁷ Andrew Denham & Mark Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Buckinghamshire, 2002), pp.265-276. The cycle of poverty thesis had first been proposed by American anthropologist Oscar Lewis in *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York, 1959).

⁴⁸ Paul Skirrow, 'For the Poor', CAPA, Proceedings of the 1987 CAP conference, p.13. Underlining is Skirrow's own.

presented this situation as a moral challenge to the Thatcherite orthodoxy. Much of the source and strength of the Church, therefore, came from the spiritual thrust behind its position. Thatcherism was not simply denounced as unworkable or wrong, but morally reprehensible and unchristian. As the CAP newsletter stated in 1989: 'Christianity.....is about the gift, and fact, and promise of community. It would be difficult to find an ethos more antithetical to Christianity than that encapsulated in the PM's notorious observation: "there's no such thing as society."'⁴⁹

II. The Welfare State

If poverty was the central issue that galvanised Anglican bishops, commentators and Christian activists groups then it was the politics of state welfarism around which their outlook was framed.⁵⁰ One of the defining characteristics of neo-Conservatism was an ideological objection to a large bureaucratic welfare state, which those on the right argued overburdened the nation's economy and the individual taxpayer, and created a cycle of poverty rather than solving it. As the free market economist Ralph Harris forcefully argued in 1971, the welfare state was 'anything but a gift horse. Rather it is a lame nag harnessed to an outdated bandwagon.....the sovereign people should pull hard on the reins, ask for their money back and get off the overcrowded monstrosity.'⁵¹ Public spending actually increased under Mrs Thatcher, yet this does not take away from the fact that these years signalled an important ideological shift in understanding about the values and policies that should guide Britain's welfare system.⁵²

As has already been noted, the 1970s disillusionment with the welfare state was not confined to those on the right, for many on the left (albeit for different reasons) had also become increasingly sceptical of the state's ability to alleviate social inequalities. Anglican churchmen in the 1970s had shared this disenchantment with bureaucratic centralism, advocating a mixed economy of welfare whereby the voluntary, private and state sectors

⁴⁹ Nicholas Lash, 'The Politics of Evangelisation in Britain Today', CAPA, *Poverty Network*, (Spring 1989), p.5.

⁵⁰ When the Church or government used the term welfare state, this was believed to consist of health services, social security, housing and personal social services, but not education or law and order.

⁵¹ Ralph Harris, 'A Gift Horse' in Rhodes Boyson (ed.), *Down with the Poor* (London, 1971), p.19.

⁵² The social security budget more than doubled (largely due to rising numbers on unemployment benefit), while the NHS also received a significant rise in funds. The real casualty was public housing, with investment decreasing from 5.6 to 3.2 billion pounds: Chris Cook & John Stevenson, *The Longman Companion to Britain Since 1945* (2nd edition, 2000), p.177.

would all act as suppliers of support.⁵³ Yet in the eighties, in the face of the Thatcherite onslaught on welfarist values and the imposition of widespread cuts on public services, the Church of England emerged as one of the leading defendants of statutory aid.

In 1982 the Social Policy Committee held a residential meeting in an effort to coordinate the Anglican response to the growing crisis in welfare.⁵⁴ Setting up a working party, it sought contributions from voluntary organisations, clergy, dioceses and laity on the subject.⁵⁵ The conflicting response this consultation generated serves as a useful reminder of the sheer breadth of opinions within the Church of England. Most Anglicans were of the view that the welfare state was an embodiment of Christian values, yet there was noticeably less faith in its bureaucratic reality. Some argued that it had bred a culture of entitlement rather than independence; others highlighted that the welfare state had eroded the bedrock of a Christian society, the family; whilst some pointed to the way that centralisation had destroyed community and the voluntary impulse in society. There was a consensus that the Church should take a lead in marshalling a public defence of welfarism, but there was little agreement as to how this should be undertaken. Some proposed that the Church needed to speak in terms of specifics rather than generalities, while others warned of the dangers of such an approach.⁵⁶

The working party collated its findings in a 1986 publication entitled *Not just for the Poor: Christian Perspectives on the Welfare State* reinforcing a belief in the ‘vision, if not the detail, of the postwar settlement’ which, it argued, stemmed from a core Christian ideal: ‘Our Christian understanding is that, not just within the Christian community but within society as a whole, “we are members of one another.”’⁵⁷ The report also made pointed remarks about the unchristian nature of the government’s ‘individualist philosophy’ which had exacerbated divisions within society and created ‘a socially disenfranchised sub-class’ of benefit claimants.⁵⁸ The following February, the Synod debated the report, passing a

⁵³ In the 1970s, the BSR’s journal, *Crucible*, was littered with articles that were critical of centralised welfare for stifling individual responsibility and voluntarism, see for example, Leslie Paul, ‘Where after Welfare?’, *Crucible*, (July-September 1976), pp.126-134.

⁵⁴ LPL, BSRP, SPC, BSR/SPC/M/1, A. W. Morgan, ‘The Future of the Welfare State’, Additional paper for the Chester meeting, 3 December 1982.

⁵⁵ The working party included Dr Michael Bayley (lecturer in social administration, University of Sheffield), Robert Bessell (former director of Warwickshire Social Services Department), Prof. Ronald H. Preston, Malcolm Wicks (now a Labour MP, then Director of Family Policy Studies Centre), Prof. Paul Wilding, (Lecturer in social administration, Manchester University) as well as members of the Social Policy Committee.

⁵⁶ LPL, BSRP, SPC, 1985, Responses to the discussion document on the future of the welfare state (85) 2.

⁵⁷ *Not Just for the Poor. Christian Perspectives on the Welfare State* (London, 1986), p.134, p.136. See also the consultation document: *The Future of the Welfare State: Questions which need attention* (London, 1984).

⁵⁸ *Not Just for the Poor*, p.136.

resolution affirming that the state should continue to act as the primary provider of welfare services.⁵⁹

Not just for the Poor was more than just a tepid endorsement of the welfare state it was a Christian vindication of Beveridge's original vision. This assertion of the Christian principles underlying statutory welfare became the standard Anglican response to Mrs Thatcher's welfare policies, be they cuts in expenditure or the introduction of market principles into state services. The Bishop of Durham, speaking in 1989 in response to the government's plans for the NHS, articulated this position most forcefully when he proclaimed: 'much has gone wrong, but were the undertaking and intentions in themselves wrong? Was the *message* false, the message, that is, that we as citizens acknowledge together some responsibility for one another?'⁶⁰ The Bishop christened the NHS, along with state education, social security benefits and pensions, as 'practical sacraments', representative, he stated, 'of the sort of society we desire to be'.⁶¹ Some went even further, such as the Rev. Eric Saxon, who in an article in *Crucible*, described health and social workers as 'the other laity', who in his opinion were performing the Church's mission as much as those working within the internal ecclesiastical structures or charities.⁶²

Time and time again, Anglican leaders, clergy and activists emphasised the fact that a welfare system, to which all citizens contributed and benefited from, was an expression of national unity and Christian intent in British society. In the BSR's response to the proposed 1985 Social Security Bill, for example, it condemned the proposed replacement of the existing grants system with a social fund (credit which claimants would eventually have to pay back), arguing that the new regulations would destroy the historic connection between citizenship and welfare rights and would effectively transform the state into a loans company.⁶³ As the BSR made clear, the scheme corrupted the principle of social citizenship and re-established Victorian notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, which the welfare state was supposed to have removed. Churchmen also condemned the Conservative government's commitment to lower taxation and the encouragement of 'opting out' from state to private services, deeming both as a threat to the contributory and universal basis of citizenship. A reduced state and a reliance on individual responsibility, was both a

⁵⁹ The resolution passed by 246 votes to 2 (with 16 abstentions): *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1987*, Vol.18, No.1, 25 February 1987, pp.193-226.

⁶⁰ David Jenkins, 'Justice, the Market and Healthcare' in *The Market and Healthcare* (Edinburgh, 1990), p.2.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p.7.

⁶² Eric Saxon, 'The Other Laity', *Crucible*, (July-September 1986), p.4.

⁶³ LPL, BSRP, SPC, 1988, Alison Webster, 'The Social Fund', SPC/88/5, 8 February 1988, p.5; Reform of Social Security: Response of the BSR General Synod of the Church of England to DHSS Green Paper, August 1985 (London, 1985), p.5.

philosophy and praxis, which left the poor exposed and encouraged a selfish attitude amongst the affluent middle-classes. During a summer meeting of the SPC in 1988, for example, in the wake of the government's plans to introduce an 'internal market' within public services, it was agreed that the Church needed to uphold the principles of 'entitlement to benefit by virtue of citizenship' and refute the government's portrayal of social security 'as taking from others'.⁶⁴ The Church, therefore, along with their allies in the poverty lobby, explicated an alternative model of citizenship than that promulgated by the Thatcher government. This was one which refuted the characterisation of welfare dependents as scroungers living off the hard-working tax-payers (an idea that Thatcherites and the right-wing press vigorously advanced) and centred on reminding affluent Britons that they profited in equal measure from state support through levy-breaks and benefits such as the mortgage tax relief (a point which was rarely acknowledged by the press and government).⁶⁵ As we shall see in the following chapter, one of the main aims of the Church's mission was to reinvigorate the altruistic and moral will of the middle classes, out of a genuine fear that they had been seduced by the Thatcherite ethos of individualism and this perception of taxation and welfare dependency. At the hub of all of this, however, was an understanding that government policies and the impact on the citizenry threatened to completely undermine the altruistic and therefore Christian basis of Britain's social democracy.

The Anglican defence of the welfare state in the 1980s can be largely explained by the Church's historic involvement in its formation. This was not simply a distant legacy, but a deep personal and spiritual attachment for those clergy who assumed the leadership of the Church in the 1980s and had developed their faith and political outlook during the 1940s. The Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins for example, has cited the moment when he heard William Temple speak at the Royal Albert Hall as one of the defining moments of his ministry.⁶⁶ This was also a point made by Eric Saxon in his 1986 article in the *Crucible*: 'clergy of my generation, who remember the 1930s and the efforts of local churches in

⁶⁴ LPL, BSRP, SPC, 1988, Minutes of the Social Policy Committee 17-18 June 1988, SPC/M/7, p.2-3.

⁶⁵ There was little in the Church pamphlets on how taxation and benefits should reflect the changing trends within society, especially in relation to women.

⁶⁶ Interview with David Jenkins conducted by author, 10 July 2007. On a general point, it is worth noting that there was a real generational divide between the bishops and those in the government. This is largely down to the fact that clergy tend to be slightly older than politicians when they assume high ecclesiastical office. Many that were bishops in the 1980s had personal experience of both the Depression and the Second World War whereas many in Mrs Thatcher's cabinet (particularly in the later years), had not.

those days of high unemployment and little public welfare, saw in the Beveridge Report the answer to our prayers.’⁶⁷

This influence is palpable if one surveys the Anglican literature from the 1980s, for the language and ideas of Temple, Beveridge and their contemporaries completely dominate Anglican sermons, speeches and reports.⁶⁸ Tellingly, neither the other Christian denominations nor the secular lobby groups demonstrated such an ideological or theological commitment to the postwar settlement.⁶⁹ This world of corporatism, full employment, the NHS and the welfare state was not only a political environment in which the Anglican leaders felt comfortable, but also one which their forebears had helped create. In defending the welfare state against the New Right, the Church was therefore defending its own historical legacy. When confronted with a Prime Minister who questioned these policies and the principles behind it, the Church of England rallied to its defence and assumed an almost evangelical impulse in an effort to keep these values alive.

Given this ideological investment in the welfare state, Anglicans took a rather sceptical view of Mrs Thatcher’s vigorous promotion of the voluntary sector, charity and philanthropy. For the Prime Minister, the non-profit sector and associational culture exemplified precisely those values of self-help and enterprise that she held so dear. As she enthused in a lecture to the Women’s Royal Voluntary Service in 1981: ‘I believe that the volunteer movement is at the heart of all our social welfare provision. That the statutory services are the supportive ones underpinning where necessary, filling the gaps and helping the helpers.’⁷⁰ Statements such as these received a lukewarm reaction from Church leaders who felt compelled to remind both the public and the government of the moral and financial limitations of the voluntary sector. In the same year as Mrs Thatcher’s address to the WRVS, the Bishop of Liverpool, for example, speaking in the Lords argued that it was a political fantasy to assume that voluntary organisations could substitute public services. Sheppard proposed that a belief in the state as the main provider of welfare reflected ‘an

⁶⁷ Saxon ‘The Other Laity’, p.4.

⁶⁸ Frequent references were made to William Temple and the Christian basis of the postwar settlement: see for example ‘The Questions don’t change’, *Christian Action Journal*, (Spring 1988); YUL, BI, PC 62.12.YOR, York Diocesan leaflet, September 1981, p.1; Alan M. Suggate, *William Temple and Christian Social Ethics Today* (Edinburgh, 1987); Hugh Montefiore, *Christianity and Politics* (Basingstoke, 1990); Stanley Booth-Clibborn, *Taxes; Burden or Blessing?* (London, 1991).

⁶⁹ Statements by the Methodist Church did not reveal the same theological defence of the postwar settlement: University of Manchester, John Ryland’s Library, Methodist Church Archive, Division of Social Responsibility, Boxes 7, 8 and 18-43; The same is true of the British Council of Churches: LPL, British Council of Churches Archive, Division of Community Affairs, Minutes and Papers BCC/2/2/1/10-33 and General Assembly Minutes BCC/2/1/2/30-53.

⁷⁰ Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the Women’s Royal Voluntary Service National Conference, 19 January 1981, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=104551>, Margaret Thatcher’s complete public statements online (accessed 12/03/10).

important moral principle' in the country which superseded any individual or communitarian voluntary effort.⁷¹ The Bishop also aimed at dispelling Mrs Thatcher's Victorian and idealised portrayal of philanthropy and voluntarism, by explaining how the modern third-sector was now fully professionalized, hired paid personnel and, with a large number of local authority contracts going to non-profit organisations, was inextricably tied to the public sector.⁷² Above all, church leaders remained reluctant to endorse the government's encouragement of charity organisations, especially as they suspected that the real motivation was because the third sector were seen as a cheap alternative to state investment. In this way, it was the Church, rather than the sector's own umbrella body, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, which proved to be the most effective spokesperson for the third sector at a time of growing expectation and pressures.

The Church adopted a somewhat similar position in respect to the Conservative government's promotion of charitable giving. At the height of the 'Thatcher Boom' the government declared its intention to turn a wealthy nation into a giving nation, confident that a payroll-giving scheme and a reduction in income tax would stimulate citizens into performing their charitable duty. These policies were met with a resounding chorus of disapproval from Church leaders who condemned the Chancellor for incorrectly prioritising charitable-giving over an aim of redistribution through taxation. The Bishop of Manchester in a substantive letter to the *Church Times* outlined what he believed to be the correct Christian path: 'Of course individual charity will always have an important place in society. It is not however morally superior to action in the political field which is absolutely vital – and often far more effective – if greater justice both within and outside our nation is to be achieved.' Quoting the slogan of the 1930s hunger marchers – 'Damn your charity, we want justice' – the Bishop concluded:

One of the most powerful Christian arguments for a democratic system in which many points of view can be heard is that it gives citizens the opportunity of rising above narrow, short term self interest and trying to love and care for their neighbours. How Britain as a nation spends its national wealth is deeply related to the great imperatives of the Gospel. Public provision through taxation in the fields of health, education, social services and overseas aid are major means by which a better and fairer society can be achieved.⁷³

⁷¹ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 8 April 1981, Vol. 419, cols.547-8.

⁷² Finlayson, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare*, pp.351-400.

⁷³ The letter is deposited in MCL, BCP, Z files, 2/01 Politics, National, Letter to the Editor of the *Church Times*, 13 September 1988. The bishop also sent a copy of the letter to Home Secretary Douglas Hurd. See also Booth-Clibborn, *Taxes*, ch.10.

This was a theme taken up by his fellow prelate David Sheppard a year later at a meeting of the Liverpool CAP group. According to Sheppard, ‘charitable giving’ was ‘discriminate’ and ‘dictated by preferences and prejudices’, whereas taxation was ‘indiscriminate’ and a ‘greater example of collective giving’ and ‘belonging to one body’.⁷⁴ These words were not only aimed at the government, but also at the general public, for in an age when marathon telethon appeals could generate twenty-four million pounds in twenty-four hours, Anglican leaders felt obliged to remind the nation of the relative limitations of charity and of the reasoning and moral justification for progressive taxation.⁷⁵

With the Prime Minister consciously evoking a Victorian and largely evangelical vision of voluntarism and charity, the Church found itself in the rather strange position of arguing against it. Church leaders were pushed into reasserting the case (which many believed had been fought and won in the mid-twentieth century), that a collectivist state was the fairest, most humane and closer to the Christian ideal than the Victorian reliance on charitable, entrepreneurial or individual efforts. The Bishop of Durham certainly saw it in these historical terms. Delivering a lecture in 1984, Jenkins explained that the political debate was essentially a battle between two legacies – although he left the audience in no doubt as to which one Christians should endorse:

To give up the central concerns of the welfare state and the Beveridge Report because we have run into difficulties is sheer faithlessness and inhumanity. To return to the ethics of nineteenth-century entrepreneurial individualism is either nostalgic nonsense or else a firm declaration that individual selfishness and organised greed are the only motivations for human behaviour.⁷⁶

Historian Frank Prochaska has proposed that ‘the evocation of a voluntary and philanthropic ethics drummed up by Margaret Thatcher fell on deaf ears’ because ‘such sentiments were being voiced in a world that had lost its Christian underpinnings.’⁷⁷ But, as we have seen, Anglicans promoted the welfare state as a demonstration of Christian neighbourliness while at the same denounced Mrs Thatcher’s rhetoric on Victorian self-help and charity as immoral and unchristian. A Christian vision of institutionalised welfare did

⁷⁴ LCA, SP, Additional Deposit Box 1 Part II, Addresses, Lectures and Other Papers 1989, Lecture to CAP AGM, 1989, p.14.

⁷⁵ Finlayson, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare*, p.404.

⁷⁶ David Jenkins, Hibbert Lecture 1985 (broadcast by Radio 4), reprinted in David Jenkins, *God, Politics and the Future* (London, 1988), p.114.

⁷⁷ Prochaska, *The Disinherited Spirit*, p.162.

not of course destroy the religious impulse for voluntarism and charity, but the latter had been significantly undermined in the public domain, not because of the decline of Christianity, but because statism had been resolutely sanctioned with a Christian outlook.

Margaret Thatcher's standing and authority owed a great deal to a specific and highly politicised reading of modern British history; one that deemed the postwar years as an unmitigated disaster and heralded the nineteenth century as the blueprint for an illustrious, industrious and virtuous nation.⁷⁸ The Church of England challenged this historical narrative by arguing the very reverse; rejecting claims that Victorian values were instinctively righteous and heralding the Biblical basis of the postwar vision of statutory welfare and social citizenship. It was this position however, which meant that the Church of England leadership became pigeon-holed by the press, government and even some laity as 'Butskellite men' championing a political vision that was outdated and redundant. As Jonathan Redden, a lay Synod member and surgeon from Sheffield complained, the Church leadership was blindly prejudicial to any reform of the NHS because it viewed the service as 'an extension of the Kingdom of God, whose constitution is written on tablets of stone' in a belief 'that the 11th commandment is "Thou shalt not change the National Health Service."' ⁷⁹ As Rev. Digby Anderson had observed, members of the liberal elite (including the Church) displayed an almost fanatical faith in welfarism to the extent that they tended to reduce the debate about public services into a false dualism between the state and the free market.⁸⁰ Mrs Thatcher's third election victory in 1987 seems to have triggered an acknowledgement of this within ecclesiastical circles.⁸¹ In his last speech in the Synod as Primate, Robert Runcie reflected that although the Church had been 'saying important things' in the 1980s, it could be accused of 'framing them in the sort of collectivist language which has been thought to be discredited in many of the areas where new things are being thought. I cannot emphasise and agree with that enough.'⁸² Although Anglican attachment to postwar collectivism may have provided the inspiration for the Church's stance against Thatcherism, ultimately it proved stifling. Church leaders were imprisoned by a nostalgic

⁷⁸ Correlli Barnett charted the 'Thatcherite' version of Britain's postwar decline in his *The Audit Of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London, 1987). On Mrs Thatcher's relationship with history and historians, see Bernard Porter, 'Though Not an Historian Myself....' Margaret Thatcher and the Historians, *TCBH*, Vol.5, No.2 (1994), pp.246-256.

⁷⁹ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1989*, Vol. 20, No.2, 11 July 1989, p.864.

⁸⁰ Digby Anderson, June Lait & David Marsland (eds.), *Breaking the Spell of the Welfare State: Strategies for Reducing Public Expenditure* (London, 1981), p.7. See also Ronad Butt, 'The Tension of the 1980s', pp.27-64.

⁸¹ Compare LPL, BSRP, SPC 1981-3, 'Cuts in Public Expenditure: Third Draft', BSR/SPC/M/1 with LPL, BSRP, SPC 1988, M/7, Michael Bayley, 'A Christian Perspective on the welfare state', 17-18 June 1988.

⁸² *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1990*, Vol.21, No.2, 7 July 1990, p.490.

view of politics and found it hard to grapple with the new political consensus that was emerging, especially from 1987, as Mrs Thatcher once again succeeded at the polls and the Labour party began to embrace the social market economy.

III. Work and Industry

Discussions about poverty and welfare provision were closely linked to widespread concerns about national deindustrialisation and mass unemployment. The Conservative government's strategy had been to relinquish the postwar commitment to full employment and state support for insolvent industries as a way of safeguarding low inflation; a policy which it pledged would eventually bring about the necessary stimulation and modernisation of the British economy.⁸³ The initial effect of this however was a sharp rise in those out of work, particularly in the industrial heartlands of the North and the Midlands.⁸⁴ On the eve of the election of 1983, unemployment stood at over three million and was to remain consistently high throughout the decade, reaching a peak of 3.2 million in 1986.⁸⁵ In the context of world recession, the effect of digital technological innovation on manufacturing, and changes in work patterns (including the rise of part-time employment and increasing numbers of women entering the workplace), this situation seemed to have little hope of improving. The image of the picket line which characterised the seventies was soon replaced with that of the dole queue in the eighties, with the frustrations of the unemployed epitomised in *Boys from the Blackstuff* Yossner's infamous plea: 'gissa a job'.⁸⁶ Commentators and historians have since questioned how the Conservatives were able to maintain power during a period of such extreme unemployment. At the time, Chancellor Lawson had confidently asserted that: 'economically and politically, Britain can get along with double-digit unemployment'.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the government did attempt to alleviate the problem by investing over £200 million into the MSC, which had a remit to set up local employment initiatives, chiefly by channelling funds to the non-profit sector.

Christian organisations enthusiastically embraced this opportunity forming the ecumenical group Church Action with the Unemployed in 1982 to coordinate and

⁸³ This policy had only limited success; inflation decreased in the early eighties only to rise again towards the end of the decade: Cook & Stevenson, *Longman*, p.179.

⁸⁴ The manufacturing workforce shrunk by nearly two million between 1979-1984: Cook & Stevenson, *Longman*, p.181.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.182

⁸⁶ *Boys From the Blackstuff* (BBC, 1982).

⁸⁷ Quoted in Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, p.222. On the specific problem of rising unemployment for the government, see Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, pp.218-220.

encourage parishes and local church councils to apply for MSC monies.⁸⁸ In Wolverhampton for example, a partnership between the diocese of Litchfield and the MSC resulted in the establishment of a Youth Training Centre for sixty trainees. Some even acted as managing agents for the government's Community Programme like the Bristol Churches Group which was in charge of a budget of 1.5 million pounds and ran twenty different schemes.⁸⁹ By 1984 over 100 Church-led MSC funded projects had been set up across the country, consisting of YTS programmes, Community Programme grants and business initiatives, signalling a new era of collaboration between the churches and the state at a local level.⁹⁰

Aside from practical support, Anglican leaders added their voices to the rising chorus of opposition from the media and political parties on the government's unemployment record.⁹¹ *Faith in the City* was an important document precisely because it set out in graphic detail the social effects of widespread unemployment, highlighting the particular struggle of the long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities and school leavers. Reiterating William Temple's statement that unemployment was 'the most hideous of our social evils', the commission painted a dismal picture of unemployed Britain:

We have been confronted time and time again with the deep human misery – coupled in some cases with resentment, in others with apathy and hopelessness....“Give me back my dignity” was the heartfelt plea from one man – made redundant, and with no prospect of a job – at one of our public meetings in the North-West.....We wonder whether some politicians really understand the despair which has become so widespread in many areas of our country.⁹²

Challenging Norman Tebbit's 'get on your bike' mantra, the commission argued that the decline in industry and employment opportunities meant that it was simply 'unrealistic' to assume that the residents of cities could migrate to find work.⁹³ For the Church, the issue of unemployment was not simply a point of policy or economics, but a challenge to faith. As the Bishop of Durham elucidated in a lecture in 1985, the social ramifications of economic decisions was not an 'emotive' and a 'wet' question, but one which was necessary

⁸⁸ LPL, BSRP, IEAC, Minutes and Papers 1980-1, Minutes of the Industrial Committee, 8 October 1980.

⁸⁹ *Action on Unemployment: 100 Projects with Unemployed People* (London, 1984), p.13.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.135-8.

⁹¹ The Lords All Party Select Committee, the SDP, Trade Union Congress and the Labour party all called for greater public spending on job-creation schemes.

⁹² *Faith in the City*, p.207.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.205. Norman Tebbit had famously declared at the 1981 Conservative party conference that during the Depression his father had not rioted but had 'got on his bike and looked for work.' Tebbit *Upwardly Mobile*, p.187

in order to formulate a proper assessment of the 'structural deficiency or inefficiency' of the government's agenda.⁹⁴ In this way, Church leaders positioned themselves as uniquely placed to offer moral insights into political decisions.

Mrs Thatcher and her ministers repeatedly claimed that in order to reverse economic decline, a reassertion of Britain's industrial spirit was needed in order to rid the nation of its culture of 'acceptable idleness'.⁹⁵ Employment was thus presented as the responsibility of the individual rather than either the state, trade unions or society. This was a deliberate evocation of a distinctly religious concept: the Protestant work ethic. Originally derived from the Calvinist notion of working for salvation and God, it was famously analysed by Max Weber as the source of the successful development of early capitalism in Protestant countries in post-Reformation Europe.⁹⁶ In an era of declining industry and when the government had abandoned its commitment to full employment, Mrs Thatcher drew upon this notion as a way of legitimising her reassertion of entrepreneurial spirit and individual responsibility for work. Analysing this discourse, one Christian commentator recognised that the work ethic was self-consciously being appropriated by Mrs Thatcher and her ministers for political means, for whereas once the doctrine had meant that the 'individual was personally responsible for his eternal destiny', he was now being told that he was 'responsible for his earthly destiny. Self-help was the name of the game'.⁹⁷ The issue of the work ethic had been addressed in a pamphlet by the BSR before Mrs Thatcher had come to power, in which it argued that in an age of mass unemployment the Protestant work ethic was a redundant and divisive model for it imposed an unchristian demarcation by upholding work as a righteous pursuit and labelling those out of work as either idle or worthless.⁹⁸ Addressing this theme at the height of the unemployment crisis in 1983, David Sheppard went even further by proposing that Britain needed to come to terms with the fact that full-employment was no longer a reality and that the onus for this situation should not fall on the individual. In his view, a redefinition of the Protestant work ethic was necessary, one which framed employment not as a requirement of citizenship but a *response* to it. The problem with the government's approach, Sheppard concluded, was that it completely subverted this understanding, by viewing people as commodities of the system

⁹⁴ 'The Necessities and the Limits of the Market', reprinted in Jenkins, *God, Politics and the Future*, p.18.

⁹⁵ Quote from Ferdinand Mount in Letwin, *Anatomy of Thatcherism*, p.312.

⁹⁶ Max Weber (trans. Talcott Parsons), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York, 1958). R.H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* was a direct response to Weber's thesis.

⁹⁷ Tony Walter, *Fair Shares? An Ethical Guide to Tax and Social Security* (Edinburgh, 1985), p.16.

⁹⁸ *Work and the Future: Technology, World Development and Jobs in the Eighties* (London, 1979). In a similar vein, the British Council of Churches had called for the development of a 'new life ethic' built on ideas of human fulfilment and common interdependence: *Work or What?* (London, 1977).

and incorrectly assuming that individuals were in control of their own means of production.⁹⁹

These musings on the redefinition of the Protestant work ethic for a post-industrial age reflected the widespread fears in the early eighties about the future of employment and industry in Britain. Yet it also points to the way in which the Church found itself having to engage with Mrs Thatcher on a doctrinal level in refuting the Protestant justification for capitalism. As CAP Chairman Peter Naish later complained in 1988: “The present government has stolen much of the traditional value of the language of Christianity and is using concepts such as “freedom”, “choice” etc. to produce policies, which bring in their opposites’.¹⁰⁰ In Naish’s opinion, the main aim of Christian social prophecy therefore must be to counter this false appropriation of the Gospel.¹⁰¹

If the Conservative government saw high unemployment as an inevitable result of an economy in transition, then industrial relations and union practises was an area it believed it had a responsibility to regulate in order to aid this modernisation. The reform of the trade unions and the abandonment of a corporatist industrial policy was justified in order to make the economy more competitive and productive.¹⁰² For the Church, the issue of unions and industrial politics was a topic that required careful thinking. The wave of strikes which had brought the country to a standstill in the late seventies had, according to theologian Duncan Forrester, resulted in the unions squandering ‘their moral credit’ revealing them to be consumed by militancy and partisan interests at the expense of the community and the greater good.¹⁰³ Broadly in line with this, the BSR in the late seventies had produced a number of pamphlets for parishioners which questioned the democracy of strikes and advocated the curtailment of union power.¹⁰⁴ The Church’s position dramatically sharpened in the eighties however in the context of mass redundancies and the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982 which imposed restrictions on the closed shop, strikes, secondary picketing and membership. The Church came to increasingly defend the rights of

⁹⁹ David Sheppard, *Bias to the Poor*, pp.112-128, see also R.H. Preston, ‘The End of the Protestant Work Ethic?’ in *The Future of Christian Ethics*, pp.115-134. The Church raised the issue once again in the mid-1990s when David Sheppard chaired a BSR report *Unemployment and the Future of Work* (London, 1997).

¹⁰⁰ Peter Naish, ‘A letter to members’, *Poverty Network*, No.9, (Spring,1988), p.3.

¹⁰¹ This theme will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter VI.

¹⁰² E.H.H. Green, *Thatcher*, p.62-3.

¹⁰³ Forrester, *Christianity and the Future*, p.6.

¹⁰⁴ *Understanding Closed Shops* (London, 1977); *Winters of Discontent. Industrial Conflict: A Christian Perspective* (London, 1981).

the unions that were now operating in an uncertain economic climate and dealing with a government that was clearly hostile to an unionised workforce.¹⁰⁵

Industrial strikes occurred frequently during Mrs Thatcher's first years in power, in the steel industry, NHS, civil service and transport sectors, yet it was the miners' strike (1984-5) in her second term which proved to be the defining moment for industrial relations during her premiership.¹⁰⁶ With the government fully prepared and determined for a full confrontation with the miners, the task of closing economically inefficient pits was always going to result in a damaging and protracted conflict. Yet hopes of a speedy settlement between the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the National Coal Board (NCB) were soon dashed as the battle increasingly focused around the unyielding personalities of Arthur Scargill at the NUM, Ian MacGregor at the NCB and Mrs Thatcher. The year-long dispute seemed unending, as pits became sites of violence and harassment between riot police and picketers, and between strikers and working miners, whilst the local communities suffered under the severe financial constraints resulting from the striking workforce.

Under such heated circumstances, the Church of England (along with the other Christian churches in Britain) felt compelled to enter into this divisive and damaging dispute. This was most prominently and effectively demonstrated at a local level where the church's network of industrial chaplains, voluntary organisations and local parishes orchestrated their efforts into aiding those communities blighted by the strike. Many of the support groups and soup kitchens were based in church buildings manned by the laity and clergy wives for example, a contribution, which often goes unmentioned in left-wing accounts of the episode.¹⁰⁷ According to an internal memorandum produced by the BSR written at the end of the dispute, this activity had 'led to new alliances being forged' to the extent that 'the participation of the church is now welcomed by people and groups who hitherto would have had little time for it.' It had also had the effect of instilling a sense of political consciousness, giving rise to 'a new awareness of the indivisibility of the 'pastoral' from the 'social/political' amongst the clergy.'¹⁰⁸ This involvement thus gave the Church credibility and purpose in areas where historically it had been lacking and allowed the Anglican leaders to speak with a degree of legitimacy on behalf of the mining communities.

¹⁰⁵ LPL, BSRP, LEAC, Industrial Committee Minutes and Papers 1980-81, Trade Union Immunities Bill 8128, Michael Atkinson, 10 May 1981.

¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Goodman, *The Miners' Strike* (London, 1985); Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, ch.7; Young, *One of Us*, ch.16; Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, pp.355-370.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 21 December 1984; Brian Jenner, *The Coal Strike: Christian Reflections on the Miners' Struggle* (Sheffield, 1986).

¹⁰⁸ BMCL, BCP, Z Files, Section 5, 'The mining dispute and the churches', 7 March 1985.

In the first six months of the strike, however, Church leaders refrained from making any public statements on the dispute. This policy of 'silence' generated criticism from some quarters especially as violence erupted between picketers and policemen at pits such as in Orgreave in June 1984.¹⁰⁹ A sermon by the Bishop of Durham at his enthronement ceremony in September however, threw the Church into the centre of the conflict. Speaking in his capacity as the spiritual representative of a community blighted by the strike, Jenkins offered a vindication of their cause:

They are desperate for their communities and this desperation forces them to action. No one concerned in this strike, and we are *all* concerned, must forget for one moment what it is like to be part of a community centred on a mine or a works when that mine or works closes. It is death, depression and desolation.¹¹⁰

Jenkins attacked the government for its unwillingness to coordinate a compromise between the NCB and NUM, believing that Mrs Thatcher's labelling of the strikers as the 'enemy within' was evidence that the government was unable to 'give hope in the very difficult days we are faced with'.¹¹¹ Jenkins also called for the resignation of NCB Chairman Ian MacGregor, whom he controversially (and incorrectly) denounced as an 'elderly imported American'.¹¹²

The sermon met with rapturous applause from the congregation and received universal praise in the Durham community where the local free newspaper the *Wear Valley Advertiser* reprinted it in its entirety. Jenkins' words had propelled the Church into the centre of a political minefield. Amidst mounting criticism, the Archbishop of Canterbury hastily issued a letter of apology to MacGregor on Jenkins' behalf, however, this did nothing to appease those Anglicans who felt that the Bishop had inappropriately used a spiritual occasion to make a political statement.¹¹³ Although Jenkins' had called for a fair settlement to the dispute, his sermon was interpreted in the press and by the government as championing the miners' cause. Journalist Ronald Butt's reaction was typical when he surmised that 'Between the lines of his sermon, political prejudice elbowed aside both charity and the genuine compassion that is based in understanding.'¹¹⁴ This accusation of political bias was not helped by the fact that the prelate followed up his sermon with an

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 21 September 1984.

¹¹⁰ 'The Cost of Hope' reprinted in Jenkins, *God, Politics and the Future*, p.8.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.9. MacGregor was in fact Scottish.

¹¹³ Jenkins, *Calling of the Cuckoo*, p.114; *Daily Mirror*, 24 September 1984.

¹¹⁴ Ronald Butt, 'A Word in Bishop Jenkins' Ear', *The Times*, 27 Sept 1984.

open letter to Energy Secretary Peter Walker in which he accused the government of making a 'virtue of confrontation' and of having little understanding of 'what a community is and what a country is'.¹¹⁵ Jenkins was beginning to gain a reputation as a turbulent priest, while the Church more generally was characterised as siding with the unions. *The Economist* wryly noted that this solidarity with the strikers was possibly down to the fact that the Church could sympathise with an institution that was also suffering from a rapidly depleting membership.¹¹⁶ In truth, however, Jenkins' sermon was not a particularly sophisticated or even controversial analysis of the situation, but an instinctive Anglican reassertion of the centre ground and an endorsement of the corporatist industrial policy that had defined the postwar decades – even if his rather loose language suggested otherwise.¹¹⁷

It was left to the Archbishop of Canterbury to clarify the Church's position on the strike. In an interview with *The Times* in October 1984, Runcie set out his desire for the government to initiate a settlement and condemned both the intransigence of the NUM and the NCB. While he denounced the violence of picketers, Runcie argued that this disobedience had its roots in the combative and uncompromising positions on both sides, for it was the 'abuse, the cheap imputation of the worst possible motives, treating people as scum in speech, all this pumping vituperation', which had escalated the disagreement into disorder.¹¹⁸ He also linked the government's conduct during the strike with its handling of the unemployment crisis, concluding that harsh and radical economic change, however necessary, could not simply be bulldozed through in the name of efficiency and profit. Persuasion, compensation and compassion were needed in order to ease the transition and to preserve the national community.¹¹⁹ Runcie's comments inspired Baptist minister Paul Rowntree Clifford to write a letter to *The Times* praising the Archbishop for successfully turning the issue of the strike into a fundamental 'questioning' of the government's 'values and priorities'.¹²⁰

The subtlety of Runcie's position was to a certain extent lost amidst the hyperbolic polarities of the tabloid press, but it was clear that his aim had been not to engage with the intricacies of the dispute, but to outline the damaging ramifications for the body politic.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ See *The Times* 25 September 1984 and 2 October 1984.

¹¹⁶ 'God's Picket Line', *The Economist*, 24 November 1984.

¹¹⁷ Clifford Longley, 'Why the Church is anti-Thatcher', *The Times*, 25 September 1984. For Jenkins' reflections on his sermon see his *Calling of the Cuckoo*, pp.107-121.

¹¹⁸ 'Runcie challenges Tory Handling of Miners' Strike', *The Times*, 8 October 1984.

¹¹⁹ David Watt, 'No More Windfalls: Just Rotten Apples', *The Times*, 12 October 1984.

¹²⁰ *The Times*, 12 October 1984.

¹²¹ The Anglican position was supported by the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, which in November 1984, issued a statement calling for a settlement, recommending that industrial relations should follow the 'fundamental moral principles concerning the human person and the legitimate

However, as the Bishop of Sheffield recognised, the Church's appeal for a settlement, although correct, went against the current political grain: 'Compromise (like appeasement) has become a dirty word....Those of us who like to hear both sides of an argument, who can recognise good in each other and believe it worthwhile to strive for a workable truth through compromise, can seem pretty feeble. But we are right.'¹²² The tendency, whether in the print or in the pulpit, was for church leaders to condemn both the harsh tactics of the NCB and police, as well as the illegality of the NUM's approach and its failure to hold a national ballot. With the right-wing press and Mrs Thatcher presenting the miners as a self-interested militant mob – 'a scar across the face of the country' as Mrs Thatcher put it – the Church leaders were keen to remind both its own congregations and the public that the miners were fighting for their community and not just a higher-wage packet. Writing in his diocesan newsletter for example, the Bishop of Sheffield urged his parishioners to take a sympathetic view towards their fellow Yorkshire men: 'we must admire the courage, sacrifices and common purpose of the Yorkshire miners as they struggle for what they believe is right.'¹²³ For the Bishop of Lincoln, the miners were an exemplary demonstration of the defence of community in an age of capital: 'Their solidarity and endurance have helped the rest of the nation to see that materialism is not the only motivating force in people's lives.'¹²⁴ The country hardly needed reminding of how serious and damaging the dispute was, yet where Runcie and others proved themselves remarkably effective was as a non-partisan voice calling for reconciliation, in a lengthy battle largely defined by unyielding positions and personalities.¹²⁵

What is less clear is whether Church leaders held much sway with their parishioners, or the general public on all of this. If the letters pages of *The Times* are anything to go by, there was a great degree of discontent amongst the laity about the Church's public intervention. One disgruntled parishioner from Hertfordshire wondered doubtfully whether Runcie had similar words of comfort for 'the majority of working taxpayers' who were the real victims of the 'brick-throwing mob and a self-centred trade union bureaucracy'.¹²⁶ Whilst another parishioner writing to the Bishop of Manchester in response to the bishop's sympathetic piece in his diocesan newsletter attacked the prelate for presenting his own

demands of the common good.' : MCA, WP, Series 13, VI Social Issues A, Strikes, Pay and Trade Unions 1979-1990, S13 VI A/5, Miners' strike 1984/5 Public statements, Statement on the miners strike by Bishops Conference of England and Wales.

¹²² 'Of Bitterness and Hatred', deposited in MCL, BCP, Z Files, Section 5, Industry and Commerce.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ 'The mining dispute and the churches' 7 March 1985.

¹²⁵ The Bishop of Peterborough was the only bishop to come out in support of the government: *The Times*, 9 October 1984.

¹²⁶ *The Times*, 10 October 1984.

personal partisan opinions as the official view of the Church.¹²⁷ Although these letters only offer a limited insight to the breadth of opinion amongst the laity on this matter, they do serve as a gentle reminder of how the realm of secular politics had the potential to raise tensions between Church leaders and their flock as much as, if not more than, ecclesiastical issues.

One man who was particularly interested in the Church's interventions was Arthur Scargill, who, in late 1984, when the dispute was reaching its critical phase, issued a statement welcoming dialogue with the churches to help the negotiations. Scargill's invitation no doubt had political motivations, but it was one duly answered by Britain's Christian leaders. Thus in November, an ecumenical delegation which included Archbishop Habgood, Derek Worlock and the Bishop of Lincoln, met with NUM representatives at the Archbishop of York's Bishopthorpe palace.¹²⁸ At the press conference after the meeting, the delegation put the onus on the NCB, making clear that a negotiation was possible if the government and MacGregor were willing. This statement however, prompted Peter Walker to write to Archbishop Worlock accusing him of being manipulated by Scargill:

Whilst not a member of your church, I endeavour to take a Christian approach to this problem. I am very concerned when I see not just your church but my church being used by a person who is not only in total disagreement with the Christian faith, but is in close association with governments of powers passionately opposed to the Christian faith and who has certainly used methods which any Christian should condemn.¹²⁹

If Walker believed that the Church was being used as a political pawn by the Marxist atheist Scargill, then this was not how the Church saw it, for during the next three months senior church representatives from all denominations in Wales, Scotland and England, met with the NUM and even Walker himself, in a concerted effort to bring about a settlement.¹³⁰ All of this clerical activity yielded little results, yet the desire and willingness of both the NUM and the government to talk to the churches and to get them on side illustrates the continual credibility attributed to religious leaders, especially the Anglican bishops. Public opinion

¹²⁷ MCL, BCP, Z Files, Section 5, 5/03, Industry and Commerce, Miner's strike, Letter from parishioner (name withheld), 20 December 1984.

¹²⁸ 'Church leaders meet Scargill in search for Peace Formula', *The Times*, 22 November 1984.

¹²⁹ MCA, WP, Series 13, VI Social Issues A/5, Strikes, Pay and Trade Unions 1979-1990, VI A/5 Miners' strike 1984/5, Public statements, Letter from Peter Walker to Worlock, 4 December 1984.

¹³⁰ In January 1985 ten senior religious representatives from Wales met with Peter Walker, while in Scotland church leaders had a meeting with the Scottish representatives of the NCB and NUM. The delegation from the English churches met again with NUM and NCB leaders in January and finally on 1 February 1985, a month before the strike ended, an ecumenical appeal from all of the British churches was issued pleading for a settlement: 'The mining dispute and the churches', 7 March 1985.

was incredibly important during the dispute and thus it is also probable that both sides recognised the possible leverage that the churches might have in this respect.¹³¹

That church leaders were viewed as publicly useful is most pertinently demonstrated in the appointment of David Sheppard, Derek Worlock and Howard Williams (then Moderator of the Free Churches) to head the TUC's charitable Miners Hardship Fund in November 1984.¹³² Separate from the Miner's solidarity Fund (whose monies directly supported the strike), the Hardship Fund was a public appeal for the communities and mining families whose funds went on supporting free canteens, provisions for families, local women's support groups and resources for children.¹³³ The ethos of the Fund was described by Howard Williams, Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council in 1985:

It is not about merit or blame; it is not about reward or revenge. Quite simply it would be wrong to let hardship prevail. Your gifts are needed to create community once again and build on the splendid mutual aid which testing times achieved. They will help to nourish friendship, to reconcile those who are at enmity and to strengthen those human bonds without which no village or town can live.....nor our country.¹³⁴

Clearly, the involvement of these three Christian leaders in the MHF is an example of how the churches operated as symbols of national unity and reconciliation in an era of upheaval, functioning just how John Habgood had envisaged, as pivotal 'struts and beams' in society holding it together.¹³⁵ This was especially true of Worlock and Sheppard, who, because of their successful partnership in easing tensions in sectarian Liverpool, personified exactly those values which the TUC hoped would inspire donations.¹³⁶

Churchmen however, found that their role in the Hardship Fund was frequently misconstrued as a political act. Ian MacGregor had politely but rather boldly proposed that in order to avoid such accusations, donations should be put towards the legal costs of working miners fighting the unions in the courts; an idea not likely to find favour amongst

¹³¹ The unions were believed to have lost public support after the Winter of Discontent, yet polls conducted during the strike suggested that there was in fact public sympathy with the miners and disapproval of the government's handling of the dispute: Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, pp.175-77; Young, *One of Us*, p.375.

¹³² This was in addition to Mr George Lowthian (former President of the TUC) and Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos (Labour peer).

¹³³ MCA, WP, Series 13, Secular Matters Box VI, A/7, Strikes: Miners' Hardship Fund 1985-6, Report of the Miners' Hardship Fund, 13 February 1985. Poverty was an acute problem as striking miners were denied their full benefit entitlements.

¹³⁴ Ibid., Press statement for the re-launch of the Miners' Hardship Fund, 11 March 1985.

¹³⁵ See p.58 of this thesis.

¹³⁶ Worlock and Sheppard had been involved in industrial disputes in their diocese. In 1979, for example, they had both marched with the Dunlop workers on a demonstration against proposed redundancies.

its founders, the TUC.¹³⁷ Derek Worlock remained acutely aware that the press were keen to present his involvement as support for the NUM leadership, writing to the solicitor of the Fund to relay these fears.¹³⁸ Some Christian laity were certainly of the view that the MHF amounted to their spiritual leaders endorsing Scargill. One churchgoer in a letter to the Bishop of Manchester for example, advised that religious leaders should be preoccupied 'trying to fill our churches' rather than supporting a man who 'does not believe in the Church or any of your bishops'.¹³⁹ Yet clearly the appeal did resonate with large sections of the public, (Christian and otherwise) for in its first three months the Fund had raised over £900,000. One parishioner wrote to Worlock informing him that he had sold his shares in the recently privatised British Telecom and donated the proceeds to the Hardship Fund; a symbolic, albeit minor victory of sorts for the churches in their battle against Thatcherite values.¹⁴⁰

As the strike was coming to an end, a meeting was held at Lambeth Palace attended by BSR officials and ecumenical leaders to assess the Church's response to the episode.¹⁴¹ It was agreed that any subsequent press statement should emphasise the Church's contribution in the local communities, for this would be 'most readily appreciated' by the public and correctly convey 'the feeling that church leaders are aware of the local pains and problems'.¹⁴² This serves as a worthy demonstration of how the 'local' efforts of the Church was believed to reinforce its position on the national stage. While the Church's work on the ground was important, the role of its leadership was equally as valid and was especially welcomed by those on the moderate left. As the industrial editor of the *Daily Mirror* appreciated, the clergy's intervention was one which 'the government know they cannot, and dare not, ignore.' He continued: 'Their lamps shining brightly with an innocence that is both sobering and inspiring in a world grown cynical under the pressure of so much claptrap from so many other quarters.'¹⁴³ The Labour party leadership had found itself in a compromising position during the dispute, wishing to support the strike

¹³⁷ MCL, BCP, Z Files, Section 5, Industry and Commerce, Miner's strike, Letter from Ian MacGregor, 29 November 1984.

¹³⁸ Ibid., Letter from Worlock to Paul Walton, 9 November 1984. Bishops Worlock and Sheppard were also patrons of the Coalfield Communities Campaign (1985-88). The Archbishop of York had refused an offer to support the Campaign fearing that it might compromise his constructive role in helping negotiations in the aftermath of the conflict: MCA, WP, Series 13, A/8 Coalfield Communities Campaign, Copy of letter from Archbishop of York to Councillor Salt, 29 March 1985.

¹³⁹ Ibid., Letter from parishioner, (name withheld), 29 November 1984.

¹⁴⁰ MCA, WP, Series 13, Liverpool Papers, Secular Matters Box VI, A/7, Strikes: Miners' Hardship Fund 1985-6, anonymous letter, no date.

¹⁴¹ 'The mining dispute and the churches', 7 March 1985.

¹⁴² Ibid., p.5.

¹⁴³ 'Pulpit Power', *Daily Mirror*, 23 November 1984. It should be noted here that although the *Daily Mirror* was a Labour supporting paper, it opposed the radical left during the 1980s.

but also cautious of associating too closely with Scargill's radical and undemocratic policies. The churches' attempts at reconciliation, its operations within communities and the religious leaders' involvement in heading up the MHF, together demonstrated the religious organisations in Britain injecting something distinctive and significant in a dispute engineered and dominated by extreme positions and polarities.

In particular respect to the Church of England, strong parallels can be made between its involvement in the miners' strike and its role in the General Strike of 1926 when it had made a similar plea for a settlement. In that instance, the Church's intervention was deemed politically compromising and controversial, to the extent that Lord Reith had refused to broadcast the Archbishop's Davidson's statement.¹⁴⁴ The comparison with 1984 not only suggests a continuity in the Anglican approach to industrial relations, but also points to the way in which the reaction to Church involvement in such affairs had not significantly wavered in more secularised times.¹⁴⁵ The keenness with which Peter Walker, the TUC and even Arthur Scargill entered into dialogue with the churches during the miners' strike, demonstrates that, in moments of national crisis, the institutional churches, and especially the Church of England, still had a part to play, and moreover, this intervention was still deemed contentious and important rather than irrelevant and ineffectual.

IV. The Market and Wealth Creation

Writing to Woodrow Wyatt in 1988 Mrs Thatcher complained of what she considered to be the unfair and inconsistent criticisms emerging from ecclesiastical quarters: 'The Church keep saying we must relieve poverty and when we do, they say we're making everybody materialistic'.¹⁴⁶ This accusation coming as it did in the second half of the decade had some validity for as Britain's economy began to revive, churchmen refocused their energies into berating the new culture of credit, debit and consumerism and identifying the fractious and ever-widening gap between the rich and poor. Britain's economy had by the mid-1980s entered a new hyper-capitalist phase, triggered by the deregulation of City finance, the privatisation of state industries, and the housing and consumer credit boom. The garish display of money was in vogue and came to be personified in the quintessential Thatcherite:

¹⁴⁴ Stuart Mews, 'Religious Life between the Wars, 1920-1940' in Gilley & Sheils (eds.), *A History of Religion in Britain*, p.459.

¹⁴⁵ There are remarkable similarities between the Church's position in 1926 and in 1984/5. On both occasions the emphasis was on co-operation, the common good, the avoidance of class war and destructiveness of industrial discord for the nation: Machin, *Churches and Social Issues*, p.26.

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Thatcher to Woodrow Wyatt, 25 September 1988, quoted in Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, p.248.

the Yuppie. If 'gissa a job' had epitomised the struggles of the early eighties, then comedian Harry Enfield's catchphrase 'Loadsamoney' replaced it as the slogan for the new materialist age. Old problems of unemployment and poverty continued to persist especially in the North, Wales and Scotland, yet churchmen were disposed to link this situation with the rising prosperity in the South as a way of highlighting the moral dilemma that came with greater affluence. The Bishop of Manchester, for example, speaking in the Lords in 1988, mounted an assault on the materialistic culture of the 'Thatcher boom', which in his view, was a sign of the degeneracy of the nation's religious ethos:

I believe that the fair distribution of resources within a nation is vital to its spiritual health. I believe it to be utterly wrong and misguided thinking to imagine that one can have a nation which is spiritually healthy when one has large numbers of millionaires.....Both on the international and on the domestic scene our real problem is not just the problem of the poor; it is the problem of the rich.¹⁴⁷

Leading Anglicans could be heard condemning the bloated wages of City bosses (which in some firms had more than quadrupled between 1979-1986) and more importantly speaking out against a regressive taxation system which benefited the highest earners.¹⁴⁸ When in 1988, Chancellor Nigel Lawson cut the top rate of income tax from 60p to 40p in the pound and the basic rate by only 2p, it was universally condemned by Church leaders as a misguided and flagrant move to reward the rich at the expense of the poor. Nor did churchmen share the government's enthusiasm for 'trickle-down' economic theory; the idea that those at the bottom of the pile would eventually benefit from increasing national wealth. According to David Sheppard, there had been no automatic transference of freedom and opportunity, for prosperity had merely resulted in the poor hankering after new material goods such as houses and TVs, which could only be obtained through credit and were often purchased instead of more essential items. Speaking at a lecture in Liverpool in 1989, Sheppard affirmed: 'economic growth in an increasingly unequal society does not eliminate poverty, but recreates it in new forms.'¹⁴⁹ This new culture had inevitably given rise to a rapid growth in loan sharks preying on council estates and in communities unable to get legitimate forms of credit. In one such area in Liverpool the situation had become so acute that the local priest established a credit union in his parish.

¹⁴⁷ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 24 February 1988, Vol. 493, col.1244.

¹⁴⁸ Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p.183.

¹⁴⁹ LCA, SP, Publications Box 5, Press Statements 1989-1993, The Debrabant Lecture 1989, 10 May 1989, p.19.

Even more damaging, Sheppard argued, was how this wave of ‘popular capitalism’ – exemplified in rising homeownership and the credit boom – had corrupted the relationship between the individual and the state.¹⁵⁰ As has already been analysed, citizenship was a favourite theme for the Church, which underscored its statements on welfare provision and poverty. And so it also provided the framework for its discussions on wealth, with the ever-widening gap between rich and poor portrayed as damaging to the communitarian ideal and a threat to the religious integrity of the nation. As the Bishop of Southwell had warned the House of Lords as early as 1984, the government’s single-minded emphasis on individualism and wealth creation would have disastrous and ungodly consequences: ‘We could become a rich country without a soul and in consequence become a very vicious society.’¹⁵¹ This portrayal of materialism as ungodly was hardly a novel idea, what was different was the way in which the Church inherently linked this to Thatcherism and denounced the economics, culture and lifestyle of this political order as ‘selfish’ and ‘unchristian’. The Church was not the only voice forwarding such arguments, yet this uncompromising judgement from the nation’s spiritual leaders proved especially influential in solidifying popular perceptions of the 1980s as the ‘me’ decade and instilling the view that Thatcherism was an idolatrous doctrine which had rid the nation of its collective altruistic ethos. The predilection amongst those on the right was to argue that it was the ‘permissive’ 1960s when British society had cast itself adrift from its Christian moorings. Anglican leaders, on the other hand, came increasingly to argue that it was the 1980s, with the growth of materialism, social injustice and the break-up of the Christian foundations of Britain’s social democracy, when the nation’s religious heritage was being irredeemably undermined.

At the root of Mrs Thatcher’s ambition to liberalise the British economy was an aim to revitalise the nation’s industrial values, as she declared in 1981: ‘economics is the method, the object is to change the soul.’¹⁵² Hugely influential in shaping this outlook was a thesis put forward by historian Martin Wiener, who argued that Britain’s economic decline originated in the adoption of gentry and anti-materialist principles by the industrial classes in the nineteenth century which had had a lasting and damaging impact, sapping the nation of its entrepreneurial spirit and giving birth to a culture of anti-industrialism.¹⁵³ In its election manifesto of 1987, the Conservative party defiantly proclaimed that it had solved

¹⁵⁰ Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, ch.6.

¹⁵¹ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 9 May 1984, Vol.451, col.941.

¹⁵² *Sunday Times*, 3 May 1981.

¹⁵³ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and The Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980* (Harmondsworth, 1981). Keith Joseph reportedly gave a copy of the book to every cabinet minister.

this problem by successfully reinvigorating the economy and overseeing a fundamental shift in the nation's values. 'We have fostered a spirit of enterprise', it stated, 'For the first time in a generation this country looks forward to an era of real prosperity and fulfilment....What matters is the feel of the country – the new enthusiasm for enterprise, the new spirit that Britain can make it, that we can prosper with the best.'¹⁵⁴ While Christian capitalists stressed the religious basis of this 'new spirit', the Church, in contrast, persistently argued the opposite, much to the frustration of some Anglican laity and the government. According to Home Office Minister John Patten in 1989, the established Church of the realm, in an age of national prosperity, had a duty to endorse rather than simply condemn this new culture:

I do not believe that at the moment we have a theology coming from any of the Churcheswhich is appropriate for the climate of success that we have in Britain in the late 1980s. I do not believe that the Church has yet used a rhetoric appropriate when talking to a nation which is increasingly comfortable, but which should not be complacent.¹⁵⁵

Although the Church was never likely to proselytise a 'theology of prosperity', there were concerns within the Church that its leadership was allowing its anti-materialist values to entirely condition its response to Thatcherism. As has already been suggested, mainstream Christianity in the twentieth century had become increasingly sceptical and critical of global capitalism. Martin Wiener in his historical narrative had rightly positioned the Church as one of the leading organisations that had rejected the progress of industrial capitalism. Wiener cited Tawney's work as evidence of the deep-rooted 'moralistic and anti-materialistic radicalism' within Christianity.¹⁵⁶ As we have seen, this was a tradition, which was pursued with even greater gusto in the eighties. This was confirmed by Peter Morgan, Chairman of the Institute of Directors, who, in a speech in 1990 on the culture of anti-industrialism amongst the British Establishment, singled out the Church as one of the main offenders:

The enterprise culture is an alien concept for the established church. It takes no pleasure in wealth creation. Unfortunately, these establishment attitudes are also held by many of the middle classes. They hope that the '80s will prove to have been a nasty one-off experience which can be set aside in the '90s. In the meantime they have deployed all the propaganda

¹⁵⁴ Conservative Party Election manifesto, 1987 <http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1987/1987-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 22/10/2009).

¹⁵⁵ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 13 February 1989, Vol.147, col.64.

¹⁵⁶ Wiener, *Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, p.116.

methods at their disposal – the classroom, the pulpit, the press, the stage and broadcasting channels – to characterise the ‘80s as a decade of greed, to brand the successful as materialistic, and to denigrate individualism. For them the distribution of wealth is a noble activity – creating wealth is mucky and squalid.¹⁵⁷

Morgan’s opinions cannot be easily dismissed. As an active Anglican, member of his parish council and stewardship advisor to Guildford Cathedral, he had no doubt experienced these ‘propaganda methods’ first-hand.¹⁵⁸ Nor was Morgan alone in warning the Anglican leadership against this approach. Malcolm Grundy, in an article urging the Church to endorse the government-sponsored ‘Industry Year’ initiative, foresaw that the Church’s unremittingly hostile attitude towards capital could potentially alienate its more affluent members. ‘If the principal Christian denominations cannot affirm the ways in which most people in this country earn their living’, Grundy cautioned, ‘then is there any surprise that God is seen as an optional interest on the edge of life’.¹⁵⁹ These antagonisms were raised in the Synod, where lay members castigated their leaders for ignoring their concerns. As James Pringle from St Albans complained in 1986: ‘may I remind the Synod that comfortable Britain and urban priority Britain ... both need a saviour? That the Gospel is for rich and poor?’¹⁶⁰ He continued: ‘the country is waiting to be told that Britain’s problems are not primarily social or economic but moral and spiritual, that the failure is not with the structures but with man.’¹⁶¹ The accusation was not only that the Church was more preoccupied with temporal rather than spiritual matters, but also that its emphasis on social concerns hinted at an inherent class bias against its core middle class membership. As if to quell such criticisms, Archbishop Runcie dutifully marked Industry Year with a service in St Paul’s Cathedral while the Bishop of Oxford penned a book entitled *Is there a Gospel for the Rich?*¹⁶²

It was both easy and convenient for the government, the press and some laity to typecast the Church as anti-capitalist especially when pitted against the evangelical fervour of Christian economic liberals of this period. Yet the Church’s fruitful relationship with the City of London suggests that this portrayal is a little simplistic. When *Faith in the City* was published it was more or less dismissed by the right-wing press, however, its message of

¹⁵⁷ Reprinted in Booth-Clibborn, *Taxes*, p.58.

¹⁵⁸ Apparently Morgan had been prompted to speak out against the Church when he was accused by one clergyman in his diocese of promoting ‘greed’: Ibid, p.59.

¹⁵⁹ Malcolm Grundy, ‘Can we say “Thanks to Industry?”’, *Crucible*, (Jan-March 1986), p.2.

¹⁶⁰ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1986*, Vol.17, No.1, 5 February 1986, p.139.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.138.

¹⁶² Richard Harries, *Is There a Gospel for the Rich? The Christian in a Capitalist World* (London, 1992).

compassion and concern was awarded a favourable review in the *Financial Times*.¹⁶³ Interest from the banking community in the project led the Dean of St Paul's to establish a meeting group for businessmen and clergy, headed by the commission's chairman, Sir Richard O'Brien. City financiers were taken on 'slumming' visits to urban areas, while the meeting group addressed themes well beyond the confines of the report, from social entrepreneurial activities to business ethics through to probity and investment responsibilities; issues which would later come to be known as 'corporate social responsibility'.¹⁶⁴ That the City of London was willing to engage with the Church points to the moderate nature of the Anglican position on global capital. It was not an uncompromising and fundamental critique of the system, but a clear message that capitalism needed to operate within a compassionate and restricted framework in order to guarantee its benefits for the whole of the nation.

One of the principle accusations made time and time again was that the government was implementing economic theory with little consideration of the moral or social consequences. The Bishop of Lincoln had ventured such sentiments in a debate in the Synod on economics in 1984, stressing that: 'economic theories cannot be made to symbolise a whole philosophy without doing damage. The whole of life cannot be motivated by market forces. Working people are not just "costs."' ¹⁶⁵ In the same debate, David Jenkins remarked that the dogmatic and zealous tone that free-marketeters spoke about the 'salvation' of the market was comparable to the way that Marxists articulated communist utopianism, for both amounted to a 'total abdication of moral responsibility.'

It is no answer to say: "But this is the only way forward." This is as dogmatic as the claims of Marxist socialism....the costs of any policy are part of the grounds for judging it, and possibly of opposing it. A faith about economics or about politics which insists that all sorts of social costs and personal sufferings are justified now because we are surely right, the world is like this, and this is the only realistic programme, is a false faith, in fact verging on idolatry.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ 'A Flawed Faith', *The Times*, 3 December 1985; 'A Church Not Militant', *Financial Times*, 5 December 1985. The then editor of the *Financial Times*, Richard Lambert, was described by the Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, Rev. Alan Webster as a 'credible Christian' who 'knew 1662 quite well': *Faith in the City* Witness Seminar, unpublished transcript, p.12.

¹⁶⁴ Alan Webster, *Reaching for Reality: Sketches from the Life of the Church* (London, 2002), pp.71-90.

¹⁶⁵ *Proc. of Gen. Synod Debates 1984*, Vol.15, No.3, 14 November 1984, p.992.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.999. See also 'The Necessities and the Limits of the Market' reprinted in Jenkins, *God, Politics and the Future*, pp.11-22.

Political or economic convictions, be it Monetarism or Marxism were consistently denounced by church leaders as irrational, foreign and against the anti-intellectual inclinations of the British people. The Church, therefore, judged its unique role as injecting a moral dimension into discussions about economic theory, as the *Faith in the City* commission explained:

It must question all economic philosophies, not least those which, when put into practice, have contributed to the blighting of whole districts, which do not offer the hope of amelioration, and which perpetuate the human misery and despair to which we have referred. The situation requires the Church to question from its own particular standpoint the *morality* of these economic philosophies.¹⁶⁷

Whereas economists and politicians opposed economic liberalism on the grounds of rational political argument, the Church judged it on a distinctly Christian concept of man and social justice. As we shall see, the fact that the Church failed to grasp the full complexities of economic change and refused to accept that Conservatives could equally claim a Christian basis meant that its moral questioning of Thatcherism was ultimately limited. Nonetheless, as the decade drew to a close, with the market crash and home repossessions, bankruptcy and unemployment rising once more, Anglican predictions that the ‘Thatcher economic boom’ was all false expectation and had come at a severe cost to the common good, seemed vindicated.

¹⁶⁷ *Faith in the City*, p.208.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mobilising the Moral Will of the Nation: Church, Parties and Voters

It is an important dimension of the Church's contribution to the life of society to be involved in "consciousness raising", that is in producing critically informed people who can bring to bear the insights of the Gospel in creative and farseeing ways, who are thus better equipped to be citizens of the earthly city.' Paul Ballard, *Crucible*, 1985.¹

'[The] average Anglican preaching today is rather like Guardian readers talking to Telegraph readers.'
Anonymous Anglican priest, *Yorkshire Post*, 1983.²

The Church of England's foray into politics in the 1980s stemmed from a belief that Christians could contribute valid and moral reflections on public issues. As we have seen, this decade saw Anglicans vocalise their concerns about the ideological direction of the government and reaffirm what they considered to be the essential political values of a Christian society. This chapter takes this analysis further, firstly by showing how the Church disseminated its message to the parishes. During this decade Anglicans became increasingly concerned about the loss of public altruism particularly amongst the middle classes whom they feared had been seduced by Thatcherite individualism. Therefore a major preoccupation for the Church and Anglican activists was to bring about a reinvigoration of the moral will of the nation by educating its parishioners and the general public on the nature of poverty, encouraging social activism, and informing voters of the moral choices to be faced at the time of elections. Because of this activity, the Church was often charged with playing party-politics. The second section of this chapter, therefore, will seek to locate the Church's statements within the partisan context of the 1980s, showing how the weakness of the Labour party was a crucial factor in the prominence of the Church and revealing how, despite being labelled otherwise, Anglicans tended to reflect the non-partisan centrist values of the liberal Establishment rather than explicitly party political views. Finally this chapter will end by assessing the impact of the Church's opposition to the Thatcher government, analysing its successes and its shortcomings, and determining whether it was based on a Christian vision of politics and society which was no longer a reality.

¹ Paul Ballard, 'The work crisis – pointers for ministry', *Crucible*, (July-September, 1985), p.118.

² *Yorkshire Post*, 18 October 1983, quoted in Ronald Butt, 'The Tension of the 1980s' in Michael Alison and David L. Edwards (eds.), *Christianity and Conservatism. Are they compatible?* (London, 1990), p.42.

I. The Church's Educational Mission

In April 1984, the Bishop of Liverpool was given the opportunity of fifty minutes of uninterrupted prime-airtime on the BBC to deliver the organisation's annual Dimpleby lecture. The title of his talk was 'The Other Britain' in which the Bishop drew upon the experiences of the socially deprived within his diocese to press home his concerns about poverty within the nation. The intended audience for Sheppard's evocative address was not the Conservative administration or the studio audience (which one commentator described as the 'wet government in exile'), but 'comfortable Britain': the largely middle-class audience tuning in at home which amounted to 4.7 million viewers.³ Society, Sheppard contended, was currently divided into two halves: 'middle Britain' i.e. the comfortable and wealthy, and 'other Britain', the poor and unemployed who disproportionately resided in Britain's run-down and dilapidated cities. Stressing that the corporate ethic was the dominant message of Christianity, Sheppard condemned what he saw as the prevalent culture of self-interest amongst the middle classes, who remained ignorant of the social inequalities within society and seemed content to allow the situation to continue. Sheppard acknowledged that he himself was a member of 'comfortable Britain', but claimed that this made him uniquely qualified to deliver such an address: 'I am criticising what I both understand – and love'. He concluded by urging 'comfortable Britain' to respond to the pressing 'moral challenge' of poverty that confronted the nation.⁴

Sheppard's public plea received a warm reception from both Anglicans and the general public, with the BBC receiving 106 letters of support (compared with only twelve that were critical), as well as thirty-eight financial donations from viewers. The Liverpoolian writer Alan Bleasdale wrote to the Bishop thanking him for speaking on behalf of his community and making a stand 'with the dignity, grace (no pun intended!) and such shining compassion for all those pawns in the game. They need you, and thank God you are here.'⁵ For many urban clergy, Sheppard's lecture had especial meaning, for it demonstrated their Church leaders articulating the problems they encountered on a daily basis in their parishes. As the Rector of Wigan enthused in a letter to Sheppard: 'As a priest I felt a bit more relevant than I have for some time', adding that it was befitting that such a provocative

³The audience was made up of Labour and SDP MPs, Liverpool dignitaries, ecclesiastical hierarchy and BBC folk although Brian Griffiths, Norman Strauss and Digby Anderson were in attendance as the 'non-wets': LCA, SP, Publications Box 5, 'The Other Britain' folder; 'Conscience stirrer', *New Society*, 19 April 1984. Sheppard's Dimpleby lecture was watched by one million more viewers than Roy Jenkins who had delivered the address the previous year: 'The Other Britain' folder, Letter from Jeremy Bennett, 15 June 1984.

⁴ David Sheppard, *The Other Britain* (Nottingham, 1984). No page numbers in document.

⁵ LCA, SP, Publications Box 5, 'The Other Britain' folder, Letter from Alan Bleasdale, 10 May 1984.

speech had been broadcast during Holy Week: ‘you should have entered on a donkey, and there should have been pigeons to release and a few spare tables to overturn!’⁶ Sheppard’s lecture did not enjoy a favourable reception from all quarters however, with the right-wing press particularly scathing in its assessment. The *Daily Mail* disapproved of the fact that in ‘the climax of the Christian year’, the Bishop had been given a gold-plated opportunity to proselytise the Revelation to millions, yet he had used the occasion to ‘talk about housing’.⁷ The *Daily Telegraph* rallied to the defence of ‘middle Britain’, the target of Sheppard’s speech and incidentally the paper’s main readership: ‘Christ died for them, too: and this Easter it would be good to hear Bishop Sheppard say so.’⁸ Taking a different view, John Junor of the *Sunday Express* dismissed Sheppard’s lecture as another example of priestly moralising for which there was little public interest and which was best reserved for the pulpit: ‘Why the hell then do millions have to have inflicted upon them this dreary drip droning on for 50 minutes of prime time on BBC TV?’⁹

There was nothing that was particularly new or radical in Sheppard’s lecture; it echoed much of what he had outlined in his *Bias to the Poor* published a year earlier and which was soon to feature in *Faith in the City*. Nonetheless, the speech is an important demonstration of how the Church attempted to communicate its message to affluent Britons. For as much as the Church’s prophecy was addressed to the government, the majority of the Church’s time, energy and effort was focused on informing and seeking to influence the public, particularly ‘middle Britain’, where the Church believed it could have the greatest impact.¹⁰ As has already been demonstrated in the last chapter, the Church saw its public prophetic role as one of scrutinising political choices and philosophies in light of Christian doctrine, yet this was coupled with a belief that this message needed to be disseminated to ‘comfortable Britain’; the linchpin on which the nation’s social democratic system supposedly hinged. Tellingly, the Anglican leadership seemed to have a somewhat vague notion of who precisely made up this group. Clearly they were distinct from the ‘poor/working class’, but often ‘churchgoers’ was used interchangeably with the ‘middle classes’ in Anglican publications and speeches, with no clear differentiation between the two. ‘Comfortable Britain’, ‘affluent Britain’, ‘suburban Christians’ and the rather scornful

⁶ Ibid., Letter from Rev. K. M. Forrest, 18 April 1984.

⁷ ‘Casting Doubt on the Christian Message of Hope’, *Mail on Sunday*, 22 April 1984.

⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, 19 April 1984; see also *The Times*, 27 April 1984.

⁹ *Sunday Express*, 22 April 1984. For a more supportive review: ‘The Bishop Bats Again’, *Daily Mirror*, 17 April 1984.

¹⁰ William Temple had also stressed the importance of the Church in educating its citizens in Christian civic principles: Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (London, 1976 edition), p.58.

term 'BUPA parishioners' were also deployed.¹¹ Such a loose taxonomy reflects the degree to which the Church believed that it still had an influence amongst the broadly-defined middle class, irrespective of whether they were regular churchgoers or not, while it also reflected a genuine desire to make its appeal as wide as possible.

At the root of this educational strategy was a belief that the Church was in a unique position and had a special duty to inform 'comfortable Britain' about social disparities within the nation and to rekindle their Christian sense of altruism to the poor. Speaking at the House of Lord's debate on *Faith in the City* in 1987, David Sheppard deliberately tied the idea of 'one nation' with that of the body of Christ and the custodian role of the established Church, in order to declare that: 'The symptoms in these urban priority areas, reflect a disease in the whole body...we believed our task to be, as one might say in Biblical terms, that of being a watchman, restating the vision of one body and one nation, and warning those in comfortable Britain of what we had seen and heard.'¹² This obligation became the chief priority for Church leaders and activists during the 1980s, who believed that 'comfortable Britain' was the key audience if the divisions within the nation were to be healed and Britain's social democratic legacy was to be salvaged. This mission had the backing of Anglican theologians too. Reflecting on the role of the Church in modern society, theologian R.H. Preston considered that the Church's aim must be to nurture a 'spirit of self-criticism' amongst its members in a personal as well as sociological capacity. The latter would be achieved by making affluent citizens understand how 'their own well-being depends upon mutual co-operation' with the rest of society.¹³ Returning to this theme five years later in 1988, Preston, adopting a more politicised tone, declared that it was the Church's duty to reignite the 'political will to share wealth' and to persuade affluent Britons to see beyond 'the short-sighted, divisive, penny pinching attitudes of the present Government'.¹⁴

Thus one of the primary goals of *Faith in the City* was educative. This was confirmed by David Sheppard in a letter to the Chief Rabbi soon after its publication: 'it is rightly aimed at suburban Britons, who all too easily seem to blame those who have been left behind.'¹⁵ And this is clearly evident in the tone of the report. 'The Urban Priority Area is of our own making', the commission affirmed, 'The combination of our private preferences

¹¹ LPL, CAA, MS 4445, fol.143. Organisations like CAP and CA tended to be more preoccupied with their Christian membership and were therefore less likely to address 'middle class' public as a whole.

¹² *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 2 February 1987, Vol.484, col.75.

¹³ R.H. Preston, *Church and Society in the Late-Twentieth Century*, p.128.

¹⁴ R.H. Preston, 'Morality and Thatcherism: Christian Ethics and the New Right', *Christian Action Journal*, (Spring 1988), p.14.

¹⁵ LCA, SP, UPA Box, *Faith in the City* file, Letter to the Chief Rabbi, 4 March 1986.

and the ramifications of our political choices are returned to us here as the geographical dimension of an unequal society.¹⁶ For Joe Hasler, a Children's Society community worker from Merseyside, proof that the Church's prophecy was 'aimed at the rich' was made blatantly obvious by its axiom to 'remember the poor', a point, which Hasler wryly noted, the poor themselves did not need reminding of.¹⁷ David Sheppard, however, framed it in slightly more positive terms, that of fostering a dialogue and understanding between the powerless and powerful in society; a mission he himself embraced with evangelical zeal. 'Those of us, who know the reality of poverty in Britain today', he urged in a lecture in 1989, 'owe it to the rich and comfortable – our brothers and sisters – to tell them about the actual experience of people, who belong to the same body, the same marching regiment, the same nation.'¹⁸ As the above analysis suggests, although the Church declared that it was acting as the 'conscience of the nation', it was in fact operating as the 'conscience of the middle classes'.

The importance accorded to enlightening 'comfortable Britain' was not confined to the ecclesiastical hierarchy but was also embraced by Christian organisations and pressure groups. As early as 1979, the Christian Action committee had agreed that it should focus its work on challenging the entrenched 'white middle-class mentality' within the parishes.¹⁹ CAP, on the other hand, had been formed precisely out of a desire to encourage parishioners to 'understand the operations of the structures in our society that manufacture poverty' and to enable people 'to take action themselves to advocate change'.²⁰ This, it judged, could not be achieved simply by protestations by bishops, for it was crucial to disseminate the message at a local level. CAP's stated aim was to bring about what they termed as 'the conscientisation of the Church', and its literature was entirely geared towards equipping Christians with the knowledge and conviction to campaign against injustices within their community and beyond.

The majority of Anglican pamphlets, sermons and speeches therefore were focused on reawakening the altruistic spirit of the middle classes out of a genuine fear that they, like the Conservative parliamentary party, had lost faith in the collective idea of the nation. According to the Bishop of Manchester, Britain no longer believed in the 'spiritual value of

¹⁶ *Faith in the City*, p.25.

¹⁷ Joe Hasler, 'With you always- but absent?' *Crucible*, (January-March 1987), p.13.

¹⁸ LCA, SP, Publications Box 5, Press Statements 1989-93, The Debrabant Lecture 1989, 10 May 1989, p.6, p.7. The image of one body or of a disease in the body politic was an image frequently evoked by clergymen – which took on a completely different resonance in the age of HIV-AIDS.

¹⁹ LPL, CAA, MS 4445, fol.17.

²⁰ CAPA, 'Poverty in the UK', 30 April 1987.

equality' for politics had once again returned to age-old rival class interests.²¹ In his view, the popular mandate, which had given birth to the welfare state, had dissipated and had been replaced by political disillusionment in the 1970s and Thatcherite individualism in the 1980s. The Bishop's historical account was partly true. The 1970s had seen growing disquiet amongst the middle classes who became increasingly frustrated with trade union militancy, high taxation and inflation. As a response, this decade had seen the birth of extra-parliamentary groups such as the National Association for Freedom and the Middle Class and The Ratepayers Associations.²² The formation of such organisations was interpreted by many to reflect (amongst other things) the middle-class disenchantment with Edward Heath's Conservative party. And so when its new leader, Mrs Thatcher would come to talk of protecting her 'people', it was the interests, prejudices and values of this section of British society to which she was referring.

Moreover, statistical evidence pertaining to the loss of public altruism had been revealed in an EEC survey conducted in 1976. The poll had shown Britons to be less sympathetic towards those at the bottom of the social scale than their European counterparts, with 43 per cent of UK respondents believing that the poor were responsible for their own circumstances (compared with a European average of 24 per cent).²³ The survey was quoted in numerous publications (including Christian literature), as evidence of the popular disillusionment with state welfarism.²⁴ Anglican activists therefore believed that the best way to counter the Conservative government's cuts in public expenditure was to tackle the root of the problem; namely the electorate's dismissive attitude towards the poor and its loss of faith in statutory aid.²⁵

One of the chief characteristics of the New Right thinking was the way in which it broke away from postwar conceptions of social citizenship. As Mrs Thatcher neatly surmised in 1987: 'when you have finished as a taxpayer, you have not finished as a citizen',

²¹ Booth-Clibborn, *Taxes*, p.141.

²² Roger King & Neill Nugent (eds.), *Respectable Rebels: Middle Class Campaigns in the 1970s* (London, 1979); Patrick Humber, *The Decline and Fall of the Middle Class and How it Can Fight Back* (London, 1976). The growth of conservative moral pressure groups such as Mary Whitehouse's NVLA are also part of this movement: see chapter 5 of this thesis.

²³ *The Perception of Poverty Europe* (European Communities Commission, 1977); Paul Whiteley, *Pressure for the Poor: the Poverty Lobby and Policy Making* (London, 1987), pp.145-7.

²⁴ The survey was quoted in CPAG literature as well as Anglican literature such as David Sheppard's *Bias to the Poor* and John Atherton's *The Scandal of Poverty*. For more discussion on popular disillusionment with welfare see: Paul Whiteley, 'Public opinion and the demand for social welfare in Britain', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol.10, 1981, pp.160-170; R. Jowell & C. Airey (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 1984 Report* (Aldershot, 1984); Mack & Langsley, *Poor Britain*; David Donnison, *The Politics of Poverty* (Oxford, 1982).

²⁵ LPL, BSRP, SPC, 1981-3, 'Cuts in Public Expenditure, Third Draft', no date.

revealing a belief that an intrusive and expansive state engendered a passive citizenship.²⁶ It was the principle of liberty, Mrs Thatcher argued, rather than obligation or dependence that should define man's relationship with government. This served as the philosophical underpinning behind Mrs Thatcher's pledge to ensure that citizens retained as much of their income for themselves and her commitment to downsizing the public sector. Conservative policies, such as the 'right to buy', positioned the state as an enabler and fulfiller of aspiration and independence, while the introduction of market principles into the welfare system aimed at repositioning the citizen as a 'consumer' of services.²⁷

The Church channelled all its efforts into countering this new model of citizenship, urging taxpayers to think of themselves as contributors not consumers and affirming the discourse of social rights and responsibility through political institutions. As the *Faith in the City* commission proclaimed: 'we must continue to strive to develop a society in which the political structures enable all its citizens to share adequately in the economic development of the nation.'²⁸ In a tone reminiscent of T.H. Marshall and William Temple, Church leaders asserted that welfare was the key social right which enabled a participatory citizenship, while the payment of taxes, especially by affluent Britons, was the greatest obligation that citizens could perform in society.²⁹ Thus in the age of Thatcherite individualism when the very concept of society and the word 'public' ('public investment', 'public service' etc.) was being denigrated, the Church was reinforcing this understanding not only as the basis of community and citizenship, but also as the fundamental essence of Biblical doctrine. 'In a world and society of different classes and races,' *Faith in the City* asserted, 'it is important that the Church should teach and demonstrate what "belonging" to society as a whole can mean, and to provide guidance and example on tolerance, acceptance and altruism in a plural society.'³⁰ The twofold aim of the Church's message to 'comfortable Britain' therefore, was to encourage them to link their own prosperity with the prevalence of poverty and for them to consider their own political views in light of the Christian values of justice and compassion.

If this was the ambition, then what form did this educational mission take? The 1980s saw the Church produce an impressive array of literature directed at parishioners, outlining the key theoretical and theological issues on welfare and poverty, backed up with

²⁶ *Guardian*, 26 September 1989.

²⁷ Lydia Morris, *Dangerous Classes: the Underclass and Social Citizenship* (London, 1994)

²⁸ *Faith in the City*, p.226-7.

²⁹ T.H. Marshall, *Class, Citizenship and Social Development* (London, 1964); King, *The New Right*, pp.165-8.

³⁰ *Faith in the City*, p.102.

facts and figures and suggestions as to how Christians could help. A CAP leaflet from 1987, for example, listed several ways that churchgoers could highlight the problem of poverty in their local community, from lobbying councillors to engineering their own publicity stunts.³¹ More imaginative methods of enlightening churchgoers were also developed. The Christian Unemployment Group from South Yorkshire, for example, put together a board game for parishioners. '24 Steps' had participants moving through each stage of a family's experience of unemployment including the selling of the car, relationship breakdown, moving home and investigation from the DHSS. Advertised in the *Crucible*, it promised to 'cut through the lies, the myths, the sheer ignorance of so many' and 'bridge the chasm between the comfortable and afflicted'. 'This game is one such bridge – between "the winners" and "the losers" in our society,' it claimed, 'We pray it may be used to open the ears and minds of many.'³²

The publication of *Faith in the City* saw this local conscious-raising activity escalate to new heights with Archbishop Runcie's pledge that the report would be 'debated in every parish in the land'. A 'link-up' programme partnering wealthy parishes with those in deprived areas was established, a *Faith in the City* officer was appointed in each diocese and a shortened version of the report for the laity was produced, which soon sold over 60,000 copies.³³ Local churches were sent a copy of a documentary entitled, *Does Anyone Care*, about two communities in Birkenhead and Sunderland which detailed how Church money had been invested in these deprived areas. A professional theatre company was also commissioned to perform a play in parishes, which was 'designed to promote interest in the inner city issues and to stimulate giving.' The production received a glowing review from the Bishop of Oxford, who described it as a 'superb drama, wonderfully acted and containing the right mixture of humour and challenge'.³⁴

One of the recommendations in *Faith in the City* had been the establishment of a Church Urban Fund (CUF) with the joint aim of fundraising for inner city projects and alerting the laity to the problem of urban poverty. The CUF Fund was marked with a ceremony in Westminster Abbey, while a specially commissioned prayer was read out in every parish in the land blessing the work of the CUF.³⁵ Each diocese was designated with a fundraising target, with most of the donations expected to come from parishioners. The Oxford diocese, for example, aimed to raise £1.5 million, five per cent of which was to be

³¹ CAPA, 'CAP Local Campaigning Ideas', 30 April 1987.

³² 'The 24 Steps', *Crucible*, (July-September 1986), p.46-7.

³³ *It's for you: A study guide to Faith in the City* (London, 1986).

³⁴ *Winchester Churchman*, No.317, August 1989, p.4-5.

³⁵ *Winchester Churchman*, No.305, August 1988, p.7.

donated to Church Action on Poverty. In York, charitable donations had generated £30,000 by July 1988 and quickly trebled to £90,000 within six months. Here fundraising was combined with *Faith in the City* awareness days run by the Mother's Union (with attendances often exceeding 200), while the City of Hull had their own *Faith in the City* group led by Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission (ECUM). The prelates also did their part. In 1988, delegates from the Lambeth Conference put together the *Bishop's Cookbook*, a collection of recipes, including the Bishop of Aba's Nigerian Spinach Soup and the Bishop of Dover's wife's 'Never Fail' Sponge Cake, which raised over £20,000 for the Fund.³⁶

According to Church leaders, all this fundraising and educational activity was about generating Christian concern and was explicitly non-party political. As the Canterbury diocese CUF newsletter spelt out, the CUF was 'a practical demonstration that the Church is concerned for people who live in our Inner Cities. Our motivation is not political but to support those who live and work in areas of deprivation.'³⁷ As the following piece from the York diocesan newsletter illustrates however, there was a very fine line between what constituted an 'educational' and 'political' message. Readers were asked to consider the following issues relating to poverty:

First examine your own experience by trying to answer three questions:
Am I by conviction an individualist (stand on your own two feet) or a corporate person (let's share the burden)?
Who is the poorest person I know?
How did I measure that poverty?³⁸

The seemingly non-partisan language only thinly disguised the relevance of these questions to the party politics of the day, with the Thatcherite notion of standing on one's own two feet positioned in contrast to the Christian impulse of sharing the burden. It was clear that the point of all this activity was not simply to inspire benevolence, but to encourage parishioners to reassess their political priorities. One lay member of a Christian study group from Surrey, for example, wrote to the Bishop of Liverpool enthusiastically enquiring how his 'large middle class, well-resourced suburban church' could respond 'to the challenge of *Faith in the City*'. In his reply, Sheppard informed him about the link-up programme but stressed that 'substantial changes of attitude and policy' within his parish were what was

³⁶ *The Bishops Cook Book* (Canterbury, 1988).

³⁷ Church Urban Fund, Canterbury Diocese Newssheet 4, February 1989, p.3. Underlining is Canterbury CUF's own.

³⁸ YUL, BI, PC 62.12.YOR, York Diocesan Leaflet, February 1989.

required.³⁹ Therefore, although the Church may have presented its message as educational, there was little doubt that it had a distinctively political edge. In the eighties, the Anglican laity were also subjected to a similar 'educational' programme in respect to poverty and trade in the developing world, with both charities and the BSR producing a vast array of literature, videos and courses alerting parishioners to the situation.⁴⁰ To a certain extent however, this issue, unlike domestic poverty, did not overtly conflict with partisan loyalties and was thus more easily definable as a legitimate subject of Christian concern.

A close examination of the CUF in the diocese of Winchester provides an important insight into the style, methods and some of the problems that the Church encountered in preaching this message to its middle-class laity. This diocese, which had the lowest unemployment rate in the country (four per cent), one of the highest levels of Anglican church attendance and was a stronghold for the Conservative party, exemplified David Sheppard's notion of 'comfortable Britain'.⁴¹ That widespread poverty posed a specific challenge for this area of Britain was publicly admitted by the local suffragan Bishop who stated in its diocesan synod in 1988: 'we live in a prosperous and privileged part of England, but with urban decay and human need brought to our notice, we cannot reconcile such conditions with our conscience...which ultimately affect us all.'⁴²

The diocese of Winchester was assigned a fundraising target of half a million pounds and this challenge initially received an enthusiastic response from the laity, inspiring the very best aspects of Anglicanism's voluntary and civic tradition. Lady Prideaux, for example, raised funds for the CUF by selling her home-made red church kneelers, while clergy wife, Mrs Virginia Sutherland, organised an open day for visitors to view her 'English Vicarage Garden'.⁴³ Some of the initial funds from Winchester were channelled into housing a vicar in Newcastle. Reporting on a visit to this parish for the diocesan newsletter, *Winchester Churchman*, suffragan Bishop Hassan likened the area to a 'Third World mission field'.⁴⁴ His description of this work in missionary terms, however, was not exactly the kind of challenging dialogue which David Sheppard had been advocating, for it depicted the urban poor as distant creatures needing help and redemption rather than

³⁹ LCA, SP, UPA Box, *Faith in the City* file, Letter from parishioner (name withheld), 18 April 1986 and David Sheppard's reply, 9 May 1986.

⁴⁰ In the early eighties, dioceses organised a course on the Brandt Report dealing with international development and trade. An educational pack was produced by the BSR which contained a cassette tape, a trading game and a summary of the report.

⁴¹ Hampshire had one of the highest figures for church attendance in the country: Peter Brierley, *'Christian' England. What the 1989 English Church Census Reveals* (London, 1991), p.65.

⁴² *Winchester Churchman*, No.303, June 1988, p.7-8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, No.304, July 1988, p.8; No.305, August 1988, p.7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, No.284, November 1986, p.2.

prompting Winchester's affluent to assess their own prejudices and priorities. By 1988, with only £20,000 raised, there were concerns that the CUF had not sufficiently rallied the Winchester laity to the cause. Local clergyman Michael Robinson, writing in the *Churchman*, considered that this was because there was a suspicion about the political motivations of the CUF and general a fear that too much money was being spent on 'social and community projects and too little on the saving of souls'.⁴⁵ Robinson attempted to quash these misconceptions by reminding parishioners of the responsibility that came with privilege and of the spiritual credibility of the CUF's 'mission'. Tellingly, Robinson also suggested that the Church should extend the appeal to non-churchgoing 'goodwill types', perhaps conscious of the fact that they would not have any concerns about the theological basis of the CUF that some committed churchgoers clearly did.

This case study of the CUF in Winchester reveals the difficulties that the Church faced when it sought to mobilise its affluent constituency. Incidentally, *Faith in the City* had been sold in a slightly different light in Winchester than it had been on the national platform. Firstly, poverty was portrayed as more of a threat to family life, rather than as an injustice. Secondly, the Church's role in the inner city was marketed as an opportunity to evangelise the Gospel as well as a means of alleviating social distress.⁴⁶ This was obviously a subtle ploy to appeal to the sensibilities and priorities of the Winchester Anglican community. A quick browse of the *Churchman* however, also reveals that it was not simply that the laity were sceptical about the Church's social mission, but that they had an altogether different set of priorities concerning their Church. In the letters pages of the *Churchman*, for example, there was hardly any reference to *Faith in the City*, the miners' strike or the crisis in welfare, instead internal ecclesiastical issues such as the 'unbelieving bishop' affair, the revision of the Prayer Book and the ordination of women debate completely dominated.⁴⁷ This is reinforced by the fact that in the 1985 elections for the Synod, only one Winchester member campaigned on what might be termed the 'social Gospel' ticket, with the majority of the candidates canvassing on a pledge to oppose a female priesthood.⁴⁸ This hints at a traditionalist/liberal split between the laity of Winchester and the Anglican hierarchy, yet it also points to diverging views on the role of the Church; was it an institution preoccupied with its own affairs or one that should demonstrate an outward responsibility for the whole nation?

⁴⁵ Ibid., No.306, September 1988, p.1.

⁴⁶ Ibid., No.275, February 1986, p.4.

⁴⁷ See for example *Winchester Churchman*, No.250, January 1984, p.8. The Prayer Book Protection Society had widespread support in the diocese with its own regional group based in Winchester.

⁴⁸ Ibid., No.272, November 1985, p.1.

This tension was not unique to Winchester. Throughout the 1980s, numerous opinion polls pointed to the fact that there was widespread disapproval amongst the laity concerning the Church's intervention in politics. A survey conducted by the Industrial Christian Fellowship in the early eighties for example, found that well over half of respondents (64 per cent) did not believe that the Church should be involving itself in industrial and economic matters.⁴⁹ Debates in the General Synod also indicated a growing discontent amongst a significant minority of clergy and laity who disagreed with the Church's political direction.⁵⁰ The Church's educational mission clearly had conflicting results; inspiring a mixture of anger and anguish, as well as enthusiasm and hope in the parishes, yet it was to prove even more controversial when Church leaders directly addressed the laity's political choices at election time.

II. Dog-collars and Democracy: Christian Voters and Elections

During elections, the Anglican clergy always pursued a cautious line, wary of not being seen to endorse one particular party, although the tone and content of their statements implicitly suggested that a vote for the Conservatives was incompatible with a Christian conscience. Writing in his diocesan newsletter during the 1983 election campaign for example, the Bishop of Winchester asked Christian voters to consider each party's stance on issues such as poverty, unemployment, international aid, housing, immigration and nuclear arms, urging Anglican voters not to think in terms of 'which of these promises *will* make me most comfortable?' but 'which of these comes nearest to what is morally right and just.' Recognising that his diocese largely comprised of dye-in-the wool Tories, the Bishop advised his flock that they 'should never be blindly loyal to the party they have always voted for in the past' affirming that 'whenever people are guided by their religious beliefs there should be no safe seat for any party'.⁵¹ The Bishop's words were on the surface suitably non-partisan, neither explicitly endorsing nor condemning a specific party, yet his words implied that any vote cast in light of the Christian faith would certainly not be a vote for the Conservatives and probably a cross for the SDP.

Not all churchmen were as discreet. In 1985, soon after the publication of *Faith in the City*, in a heated televised discussion with Norman Tebbit, David Sheppard suggested

⁴⁹ John Atherton, 'Implications of poverty for Christian Thought and Practice', Toynbee Hall Lecture, copy of speech in BSR, IEAC, BSR Industrial Committee papers 1981-2, p.24.

⁵⁰ This theme will be dealt with in chapter 5 of this thesis.

⁵¹ *Winchester Churchman*, No.243, February 1983, p.1.

that it was impossible to be a Christian and vote Conservative.⁵² What had been inferred in the report was now an unequivocal statement by a senior bishop of the Church of England. Sheppard subsequently received a barrage of letters from Conservative-voting Anglicans castigating him for his arrogance and political bias. 'I am a Tory, but not a so-called 'wet' Tory', wrote one gentleman, 'so that must make me right-wing, and apparently, in your eyes I am no longer Christian.' He advised the Bishop to concentrate on 'matters of prayer rather than those of the ballot box'.⁵³ The Kensington and Chelsea Conservative Association was equally concerned, warning in a letter to the suffragan Bishop of Stepney, that bishops should refrain from making political statements that risked alienating the Church's only loyal adherents.⁵⁴

The Kensington and Chelsea Conservative Association had a point. Figures on the political affiliation of Anglican laity reveal that they were overwhelmingly Conservative voters, especially amongst the Church's most active adherents. A survey from the early eighties revealed that 62.3 per cent of committed Anglican worshippers classified themselves as Conservatives and in the 1987 election this figure remained solid with 63 per cent of Anglicans supporting the Conservative party (compared with 43 per cent of the general public).⁵⁵ These Conservative leanings were also reflected in the Synod, with 55.3 per cent of the House of Laity, Tory voters. Tellingly, there was a significant difference between laity and the clergy, with only 27 per cent of House of Clergy supporting the Conservative party with the majority favouring the SDP.⁵⁶ These figures suggest that there was a certain degree of truth in the claim made by one astute vicar from Yorkshire, that the 'average Anglican preaching today is rather like *Guardian* readers talking to *Telegraph* readers'.⁵⁷

⁵² *Daily Mirror*, 16 December 1985. David Sheppard had in fact stated that he believed that it 'very difficult to find thoughtful Christians on the Right' even though the press claimed that he had stated that it was impossible to be a Christian and vote Conservative. Sheppard later explained: 'I regret using those words. If they had stood by themselves I would wholly disown them, they were spoken in a context. That context was Norman Tebbit's unwillingness to discuss the content of a very weighty report on Urban Priority Areas and his repeated claim that the Commission was not well balanced. I had mentioned member after member of the Commission, he dismissed each as not representing right wing views. It was in that context, appointing a Commission of Christians who had good knowledge of UPA, that I said it was very difficult to find thoughtful Christians on the Right.' LCA, SP, UPA Box, *Faith in the City* follow up envelope. No date.

⁵³ Ibid., Letter from parishioner (name withheld), 22 December 1985. Not all Christian Conservatives took such a view. One lady, who identified herself as an 'active Conservative member' wrote sympathetically to Sheppard: 'that Mr Tebbit needs praying for, as well as a good ticking off.' Ibid., Letter from parishioner (name withheld), 4 December, 1985.

⁵⁴ *Proc. of Gen. Synod 1986*, Vol.17, No.1, 5 February 1986, p.141.

⁵⁵ *The Times*, 1 July 1988.

⁵⁶ See Appendix VII tables relating to the political affiliation of the Anglican clergy and laity.

⁵⁷ *Yorkshire Post*, 18 October 1983, quoted in Butt, 'The Tension of the 1980s', p.42.

The Church hierarchy were fully aware that their political stance put them in direct conflict with the majority of their parishioners. Sheppard and others however, believed it was their duty to readdress 'comfortable Conservative-voting Britain' whom they feared were sacrificing their Christian principles for their political preferences. And yet, these Anglican Conservatives voters (who were invariably on the traditionalist wing of the Church) believed with equal passion that the ecclesiastical hierarchy were the ones allowing their secular political leanings to dictate their interpretation of Christian doctrine. For a significant section of the laity then – those middle-class, Anglican Tories residing in 'comfortable Britain' – the breach between their Church and party felt distinctly personal, for it appeared that these two institutions, which had always been complementary allegiances, were now in direct conflict.

As the 1987 election approached however, there was real hope within the Church and in the revived Labour party, that the public had grown weary of the Conservative government and that, after eight years of Mrs Thatcher in power, there was a desire for change within the country. More importantly, there was a sense that Christianity and more specifically the Church, could prove a pivotal force in the election. The *Guardian* religious correspondent Walter Schwarz dubbed 1987 as a 'moral election', one in which voters would be confronted with the key question: 'are the human costs of Thatcherite progress acceptable in a society whose deepest values are still based on Judeo-Christian ethics?' Schwarz judged that all the Christian churches, because of the moral weight of their leaders and their substantial resources at ground level, had the potential to sway voters. An outright moral condemnation of Thatcherism would help convince the public that there was no moral ambiguity when it came to a decision at the ballot box. For Schwarz, the churches' contribution could prove more influential than pressure groups and more substantial than the political parties: 'Plenty of politicians and pundits will be arguing that Thatcherism doesn't work.....The churches can do better, with more effect, just by pointing out that Thatcherism is wrong'.⁵⁸

Schwarz had been right to label 1987 as the 'moral election' for it is striking the consideration given over to Christian themes and issues during the campaign – an aspect that had been largely absent from the previous election in 1983. All three political parties appeared willing to claim the moral and Christian supremacy of their policies.⁵⁹ *Faith in Politics*, published on the eve of the election, provided MPs from each of the main parties – Conservative John Gummer, Labour's Eric Heffer and the Alliance's Alan Beith – an

⁵⁸ Walter Schwarz, 'Moral issues the Churches should raise', *Guardian*, 18 May 1982.

⁵⁹ Dennis Kavanagh, 'Thatcher's Third Term', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 41, No.1, (1988), p.1-12.

opportunity to appeal to Christian voters and offer a Christian vindication of their policies. Alan Beith's contribution, in which he labelled Thatcherism a secular doctrine and a diversion from the distinctly Christian tradition of 'wet' Toryism, was a blatant attempt to convince wavering Conservative voters to switch to the Alliance. The book, which featured Anglo-Catholic Heffer on the extreme left and evangelical Gummer on the right, was testimony to the sheer range of political opinions within Anglicanism and also demonstrated the deep-rooted theological precepts, which underpinned politicians' religious and political beliefs – views, they were confident would resonate with the electorate.⁶⁰

Christianity, it seemed, had become a highly politicised issue during the election. The BBC was especially concerned that its religious output did not compromise the Corporation's impartiality. Head of Religious Broadcasting, David Winter, has recounted how he was warned by executives not to allow 'some lefty bishop' to rant on Radio Four's morning religious segment, *Thought for the Day*. According to Winter every sermon was scrutinised, each speaker was cautioned and all content 'kept so scrupulously to genuinely religious topics that someone unkindly remarked that if they kept this up people might think it was a Christian programme'.⁶¹

Meanwhile all the Christian churches were busy injecting a 'spiritual' dimension into the campaign.⁶² The British Council of Churches organised numerous hustings through local inter-church councils, although Conservative Central Office reportedly advised prospective Tory candidates to stay away because of the unfavourable reception they would likely face at such meetings. Christian pressure groups were also active. COSPEC, for example, issued a statement entitled 'How can a Christian vote Conservative?' which pronounced that:

Another term for Thatcher will undoubtedly mean more poverty, more suffering, more violence in our cities, more racism, more nuclear weapons, more unemployment, more homelessness....How can any Christian possibly vote for a party with this record in Government?⁶³

⁶⁰ John Gummer, Eric Heffer & Alan Beith, *Faith in Politics: Which Way Should Christians Vote?* (London, 1987).

⁶¹ David Winter, *Winter's Tale: Living through an Age of Change in Church and Media* (London, 2001), p.154.

⁶² The *Winchester Churchman* reveals how the election dominated the discussion in the parish magazines *Winchester Churchman*, No.281, August 1987, p.3.

⁶³ Copy located in MCL, BCP, Z Files, 2/01 Politics, COSPEC press release, 'How Can a Christian Vote Conservative?', 1987.

CAP adopted an equally forthright tact and in alliance with CPAG and the Low Pay Unit, organised local meetings and generated media interest to ensure that poverty featured prominently on the election agenda.⁶⁴ While both CAP and COSPEC were undoubtedly preaching to the ‘converted’, it was the church leaders who had the greatest potential to reach out to a broader constituency. In the run up to polling day, David Sheppard issued a statement entitled ‘Moral issues to face at the General Election’ in which he argued that the poor alone did not have the electoral power to bring about change and that their fate was heavily reliant on ‘comfortable Britain’, whom he entreated to think beyond their own sectional interests.⁶⁵ What this amounted to, of course, was an appeal not to vote Conservative.

The 1987 election result proved not to be the one most Christian activists had been praying for. Derek Worlock summed up these feelings of disappointment in a letter to former CAP chairman John Battle, who had successfully gained a Labour seat in the House. Worlock lamented that Battle’s election was ‘one of those small shots of good news on a rough day’.⁶⁶ The Church’s appeal to middle-class consciences had not persuaded them to abandon the Conservatives. Mrs Thatcher managed to secure the support of over half of the middle classes, as well as 36 per cent of the working class vote.⁶⁷ For the Bishop of Manchester, the Conservative landslide was proof that ‘self-interest’ rather than ‘faith’ had prevailed at the ballot box:

One of the gravest threats to democracy must surely be a situation in which ‘comfortable Britain’ continues to vote firmly for policies which exclude a large minority of our citizens from the benefits others enjoy.⁶⁸

These concerns were not confined to the Church, but were also felt by non-governmental organisations. Poverty campaigner Paul Whiteley, writing in the aftermath of the 1987 election, considered that there was ‘no longer the same willingness to listen to reformers that existed amongst ‘middle England’ in the 1960s’ and concluded that campaigners needed to change their tactics and make appeals to ‘self-interest’ rather than ‘moral

⁶⁴ CAPA, ‘Election ’87- Putting Poverty at the Heart of the Agenda’, 1987.

⁶⁵ LCA, SP, Press Release Box 1984-7, Envelope 3, ‘Moral Issues to Face in a General Election’, 15 May 1987.

⁶⁶ MCA, WP, Series 13, Box IX, D. MP’s Correspondence, 1980-1987, Letter from Worlock to John Battle, 17 June 1987. John Battle was elected as Labour MP for Leeds West.

⁶⁷ Kavanagh, ‘Thatcher’s Third Term’, p.6.

⁶⁸ *Baptist Times*, 6 June 1988.

indignation'.⁶⁹ This assumption of the decline of middle-class altruism was rather exaggerated and overdramatic, yet both the bishop's and Whiteley's comments do demonstrate the genuine fear amongst liberal reformers in the eighties. In the aftermath of 1987, many social activists seemed resigned to the fact that Mrs Thatcher had successfully remodelled British society in her own image and had created a nation of Thatcherites. The 1987 election result appeared to be a turning point, which ensured that Thatcherism would be permanently imprinted onto the political and psychological landscape of the nation. With changes to the socio-economic make-up of British society, such as the rise in homeownership, increasing affluence and the decline of the manufacturing working class, it appeared (in 1987 at least), that there would be no turning back.⁷⁰

III. The Church of England and Party-Politics

John Gummer MP, writing in *Faith in Politics* in 1987, sought to make a clear distinction between a legitimate application of religious belief to politics and the 'party political stance dressed up as Christianity' then being offered by the Church of England.⁷¹ Accusations such as these, namely that the Church was being run by a load of 'communist clerics' proved a useful way of discrediting the Church to its Conservative members, but these labels were far from accurate.⁷² In order to understand the precise contribution of the Church however, there is a need to locate Anglican political involvement within the specific party-politics of the decade. It is only through such a contextualisation, that the position and significance of the Church's political intervention can be properly assessed.

There is little doubt that the polarisation of party politics in the 1980s forced the Church to inhabit the middle ground and extol the centralist values of unity, community, and consensus, which was then largely absent from political discourse. The shift to the right by the Conservatives was paralleled by a fundamentally more serious issue, namely the internal strife within the Labour party, which for a large part of the decade, disabled its leadership from acting as an effective parliamentary opposition. The 1970s had prompted an ideological crisis within the Labour party between the left and the right which would take more than a decade to resolve.⁷³ In the 1980s, divisions over the EEC and nuclear

⁶⁹ Whiteley *Pressure*, p.146, p.148.

⁷⁰ A. H. Halsey (ed.), *British Social Trends since 1900* (London, 2nd Revised edition, 1988).

⁷¹ Gummer, Heffer & Beith, *Faith in Politics*, p.4.

⁷² *Daily Telegraph*, 2 December 1985.

⁷³ For a history of the Labour Party in the 1980s, see Dianne Hayter, *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s* (Manchester, 2007); Sean Tunny, *Labour and the Press: From New Left to New Labour* (Brighton, 2007); Eric Shal, *Discipline and Discord in the Labour Party: The Politics of*

rearmament, as well as the excesses of municipal socialism, union militancy and the conflicting priorities of industrial socialism in the north and metropolitan socialism in the south, meant that it was easy for Mrs Thatcher to dismiss the Labour party as ineffectual, outdated and promoting specific class interests which had little appeal to the mainstream. The portrayal of 'Loony Left' figures such as Ken Livingstone, Arthur Scargill and Derek Hatton in the press, fuelled the perception that the Labour party was completely unfit for government and this was reflected at the ballot box, with the decade seeing the party's worst electoral results since the interwar period.⁷⁴

The weakness of the Labour party at this time convinced many clergyman that the Church needed to step into the breach. As *The Times* editorial confirmed in 1984, Labour's civil war and its battle with political extremism had left a 'vacant ground' which 'bishops plainly feel a moral obligation to occupy'.⁷⁵ Former Bishop of Southwark, Ronald Bowlby, reflecting on events twenty years later, also considered the Labour party's failures crucial to explaining the Church's prominence during these years:

There was a sense that the Labour party was in such disarray that they were not offering a voice of conscience of what was going on.....there wasn't any sort of constituency that was offering the kind of critique that in normal circumstances one might expect from any party in opposition – this was in our thinking. Who is going to speak for the voiceless?⁷⁶

As Bowlby's comment implies, it was not only that the Labour party was ineffective but also that the Christian and ethical socialist tradition had all but been abandoned by the party's leadership.

The influence of Christianity, particularly Nonconformity, in the early formation of British parliamentary socialism is widely accepted. This legacy continued to live on in the postwar period, with Prime Minister Harold Wilson claiming that British socialism owed 'more to Methodism than to Marxism' and overseeing the formation of the Christian Socialist Movement in 1960.⁷⁷ Yet under the leadership of Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock, the ethical and largely Christian ethos of Labourism gave way to a more secular and indeed

Managerial Control in the Labour Party 1951-1987 (Manchester, 1988); R. Heffernan & M. Marqusee, *Defeat From the Jaws of Victory: Inside Kinnock's Labour Party* (London, 1992).

⁷⁴ For electoral statistics see Cook & Stevenson, *Longman*, p.54.

⁷⁵ 'Hand to Mouth Leadership', *The Times*, 9 October 1984.

⁷⁶ Interview with Ronnie Bowlby conducted by author, 5 September 2006.

⁷⁷ The Christian Socialist Movement was an ecumenical and extra-parliamentary association. In 1988 it had membership of 1200, including 20 Labour MPs, an MEP and a trade union General Secretary. Previous incarnations had existed throughout the century including the Christian Socialist League, Council of Clergy and Ministers for Common Ownership and the parliamentary Socialist Christian Group.

radical outlook.⁷⁸ This change largely explains the general indifference of the Labour Party towards the Church in the 1980s. *Faith in the City* received a lukewarm endorsement, but the general view was that while the Church's intervention was well-meaning and welcome, it was essentially too moderate to merit serious consideration.⁷⁹ Tellingly, Labour MPs did not expend half as much energy engaging with clergymen as Conservative members did.⁸⁰ There were of course notable exceptions, such as Frank Field, but very little support or interest emanated from the Labour leadership. In fact, the most fruitful conversations came from those on the far left of the party, chiefly the anglo-catholic Eric Heffer and low-Churchman, Tony Benn.⁸¹ Despite being on opposite sides of the theological spectrum, both Benn and Heffer believed in the revolutionary nature of the Christian message and were in agreement that the Church needed to completely disassociate itself from temporal power in order to live-out the radical message of the Gospels.⁸²

Some Labour MPs were of the view that the party's abandonment of its Christian ethical heritage was one of the chief reasons for its ideological and electoral difficulties in the 1980s. Speaking at the CSM's Annual Tawney Lecture in 1981 (the year the SDP had been founded) Frank Field reminded the audience of Tawney's important legacy for the party. According to Field, Tawney's central premise – that 'morality was superior to dogma' – was the defining ethos of the party, which had historically separated British radicalism from the more extreme forms of socialism on the European continent. Field urged his fellow MPs to remember this maxim in these fractious times.⁸³ Tony Blair advanced a similar argument when he became leader of the party in the 1990s. Writing in 1996, reflecting on the problems of the Labour movement in the 1980s, Blair concluded that 'the Left got into trouble when its basic values became divorced from [this] ethical socialism in which Christian socialism is included.'⁸⁴ Incidentally, as the party sought to re-establish itself as a centrist political force in the 1990s, its Christian and ethical heritage

⁷⁸ Unity between these two strands of socialism in the 1980s could be seen in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

⁷⁹ The General Secretary of the TUC stated that 'it was an important, but basically moderate report': *The Sunday Times*, 8 December 1985.

⁸⁰ The author has found no substantial evidence of a linkage between the Labour party and Nonconformist churches in this period.

⁸¹ David Ormrod (ed.), *Facing the Future as Christians and Socialists* (London, 1985), p.2.

⁸² Tony Benn, 'The moral basis of the radical left: the best hope for the future of British politics' in Ormrod (ed.), *Fellowship, Freedom and Equality*, pp.103-110; Gummer, Heffer & Beith, *Faith in Politics*, pp.45-92. In 1988, Tony Benn raised the issue of disestablishment in a motion in the House of Commons, yet he received little support from his fellow backbenchers or others in the House.

⁸³ Frank Field, 'Socialism and the Politics of Radical Distribution' reprinted in Ormrod (ed.), *Fellowship, Freedom and Equality*, p.57. See also Anthony Wright, *R. H. Tawney*, ch.6.

⁸⁴ Tony Blair, 'Why I am a Christian', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 April 1996 reprinted in *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country* (London, 1996), p.58, p.59.

became more pronounced and Christian MPs became more prominent.⁸⁵ This transition had been underway as early as 1986 when the Christian Socialist Movement was officially affiliated to the Labour party, yet it gathered significant momentum under the leadership of John Smith and subsequently Tony Blair; two leaders whose political beliefs were firmly rooted in a Christian faith. This inspired a greater interest in the social justice agenda of the churches. In the mid-nineties, a group of Anglican bishops began to meet regularly with shadow Labour ministers while David Sheppard was also invited to sit on the committee of the Institute of Public Policy Research's Commission for Social Justice.⁸⁶ The report, published in 1994, directly drew on *Faith in the City* and would eventually act as the foundations for New Labour's social agenda once in office.⁸⁷ Interestingly, however, Sheppard turned down the offer, fearing that his association with the report would be deemed a political act and align him too closely with the Labour party.⁸⁸ At the celebratory service for the tenth anniversary of *Faith in the City* in 1995, Tony Blair spoke in glowing terms of the report's achievements and in an article for the *Guardian* penned soon afterwards, he made a direct connection between the New Labour project and what the Church had been saying during the 1980s: 'the essential challenge posed by *Faith in the City* remains unanswered – do we have the confidence and the ideas as a nation to achieve prosperity with fairness in the next century?'⁸⁹ The Church had to wait ten years for such an endorsement from the Labour leadership, during the 1980s however, it was the newly-formed SDP with whom the Church seemed to have greater affinity.⁹⁰

The formation of the Social Democratic Party, with its promise to offer a moderate alternative as a *via media* in British politics between market economics and state socialism, was welcomed by many Anglicans.⁹¹ Indeed, the links between the Anglican position and

⁸⁵ This also triggered a renewed interest in Christian Socialism's history within the Labour party: Chris Bryant (ed.), *Reclaiming the Ground* (London, 1993) and *Possible Dreams; A Personal History of the British Christian Socialists* (London, 1996); Graham Dale, *God's Politicians: The Christian Contribution to 100 years of Labour* (London, 2000); Alan Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism: From Scott Holland to Tony Blair* (London, 1998). On the debt that New Labour specifically owes to Tawney and Temple: Richard Woolley, *The Influence of William Temple and R.H. Tawney on New Labour* (Lampeter, 2007).

⁸⁶ LCA, SP, Social Issues Box, BSR Chair file, correspondence between Sheppard and the IPPR.

⁸⁷ *Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal* (London, 1994). John Gladwin, previously at the BSR, was the Anglican representative on the Commission.

⁸⁸ CAP had close ties with the Labour party; Labour MPs such as Gordon Brown and David Blunkett addressed their annual conference, while two former CAP Chairmen went on to become Labour MPs.

⁸⁹ 'Battle for Britain', *Guardian*, 29 January 1996; 'The Stakeholder Society: *Faith in the City* – Ten Years On' in Blair, *New Britain*, pp. 297-309.

⁹⁰ Incidentally, Robina Rafferty, who sat on the *Faith in the City* Commission, has since stated: 'the whole of the 'social exclusion agenda' that was in force from 1997 onwards was actually what we were taking about.'; Robina Rafferty, *Faith in the City* Witness Seminar, p.15.

⁹¹ On the SDP see Ivor Crewe & Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1995); Hugh Stephenson, *Claret and Chips: the Rise of the SDP* (London, 1982).

that of the SDP were such that many commentators re-branded the Church as the ‘SDP at prayer.’ Both the Church and the new party were dissatisfied with the ideological direction of politics, both could be defined as left-of-centre, and both saw themselves as defenders of the consensus tradition in British politics. The Church and the SDP also generated huge media interest quite out of proportion to their membership and coincidentally, both suffered from internal ructions which would eventually undermine their impact.⁹²

Yet the connections do not stop there. David Martin has highlighted how the SDP-Liberal Alliance did have a distinct Christian presence within its leadership with the Roman Catholic Shirley Williams, Anglican David Owen, the Methodist Alan Beith and Scottish Presbyterian David Steel.⁹³ Moreover, there is evidence of a conscious attempt by the SDP to fashion itself as the true inheritors of the Christian reformist political tradition through its naming of the party’s think-tank, the Tawney Society – much to the anger of Labour activists.⁹⁴ These claims to a Christian heritage continued even after the SDP had aligned with the Liberals. In the run up to the 1987 election, Alliance man, Alan Beith proposed that it was his party, with its appreciation of centrist and consensual values, that provided ‘the most promising opportunity available to pursue those [Christian] values in the political sphere’ and expressed his wish that Christians would make the Alliance ‘the means of expressing their religious faith in the political world.’⁹⁵

Yet not all were convinced that the SDP was the new living embodiment of Britain’s Christian reformist tradition. The appropriation of Tawney’s name was, according to historian and Labour party-supporter Raphael Samuel, ‘an exercise in generating fictitious moral capital rather than the acknowledgment of a spiritual debt’.⁹⁶ Samuel dubbed the SDP as Britain’s first ‘post-Christian party’ judging that it was nothing more than an ideologically confused conglomeration of personalities with a penchant for the ‘patrician politics of the English upper classes’, which was being transmitted through ‘flashy American media techniques’. For Samuel, the SDP’s position as a *via media* meant in reality

⁹² The SDP was formed amidst huge media hype with initial poll ratings suggesting that it could potentially become the ruling party. The internal struggles within the leadership and its lack of a network at the grassroots meant that the SDP-Alliance’s influence would be restricted to being a third-party force in politics: Crewe & King, *SDP*.

⁹³ David Martin, ‘The Churches: Pink Bishops and the Iron Lady’ in Dennis Kavanagh & Anthony Seldon (eds.), *The Thatcher Effect: A Decade of Change* (Oxford, 1989), p.336.

⁹⁴ Tony Benn, for example, felt that Tawney belonged to the left of the Labour party and was dismissive of those who undermined Tawney’s radical credentials: Tony Benn, ‘The Moral Basis of the Radical Left: the Best Hope for the Future of British Politics’, in Ormrod (ed.), *Fellowship, Freedom and Equality*, pp.103-110, see also Ormrod’s introduction.

⁹⁵ Gummer, Heffer & Beith, *Faith in Politics*, p.134; similar claims were made by David Steel in *Church Times*, 3 June 1983.

⁹⁶ Raphael Samuel, ‘Religion and Politics: The legacy of R. H. Tawney’ republished in *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain, Theatres of Memory, Vol. II* (London, 1998), p.234.

that it was a party built on the ‘pursuit of the arts of government rather than as a struggle between darkness and light’.⁹⁷ The SDP did not advocate ‘moral imperatives’ and instead believed that ‘all the great questions are negotiable, if they can be defused of their ideological charge.’⁹⁸ Tellingly, exactly the same accusations were launched at the Church leadership by both Anglican traditionalists and Conservative MPs in respect to the Church’s consensual stance on politics and morality. Both the SDP and the Church, therefore, faced criticisms from opposite ends of the religious and political spectrum, for being ideologically vacuous and motivated by pragmatism and expediency. This hints at the way in which both Christianity and politics in this period were locked in a debate about the purity and dilution of doctrine.

In political terms, there were also important parallels in tone and language between the SDP-Alliance and the Church of England. Both shared a desire to counter the ideological dogmatism then propagated by the two main parties and thus emphasised unity rather than class division and negotiation rather than confrontation. Alliance MPs also posited the domestic agenda in the same moralistic language which the Anglican hierarchy effectively deployed. David Owen in a speech to the party conference in 1983, for example, argued that one of the chief aims of the party was to persuade the affluent that they had responsibilities to those less fortunate in society.⁹⁹ The Church was a keen advocate of Proportional Representation, while the SDP-Alliance laid particular emphasis on the environment and Britain’s obligation to the developing world; two issues which especially resonated with Christians. Moreover, when the SDP was founded, it, like the Church, made a point of presenting itself as the ‘national party’ above class interest, and endeavoured to frame its support base as a coming together of all those disillusioned with the direction of Britain.

Yet the SDP’s pretensions of being a ‘national party’ were as questionable as the Church’s own self-appointed role as the Church of the nation. In the same way that the Church made claim to a national constituency but in reality drew its support largely from the middle classes, so did the SDP. According to Crewe and King, the SDP supporters were often university educated, employed in the public sector and were ‘mildly statist,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.241.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.243.

⁹⁹ *The Times*, 13 September 1983. David Owen had also penned a moral justification for compromise: *Human Rights* (London, 1978). Incidentally, David Owen had been taught by Mervyn Stockwood at Cambridge and had provided the Foreword to Stockwood’s book: Mervyn Stockwood, *The Cross and The Sickle* (London, 1978), p.ix-x.

mildly conservative, certainly not radical'.¹⁰⁰ Significantly, Crewe and King described the party's membership as like a 'well-heeled suburban church congregation' who 'seemed to think that all one had to do to solve the world's problems was to think the right thoughts and occasionally write out a modest cheque on one's substantial bank balance'.¹⁰¹ This image was not too distant from reality, as figures relating to the partisan affiliation of the clergy in the Synod demonstrate; the SDP and Liberal parties were supported by over 60 per cent of Anglican priests in the chamber.¹⁰²

The 'Gang of Four' founders of the SDP party recognised that they had a potential ally in the Church. In January 1981, Shirley Williams wrote to the Bishop of Manchester with a copy of the Limehouse Declaration, encouraging the prelate to join the Council for Social Democracy.¹⁰³ David Sheppard, Derek Worlock and Free Church Moderator Michael Hollins, were also approached to lend their names to the Council's published 'Group of 100' – a list of non-political figures and former affiliates of the Labour party who supported the initiative.¹⁰⁴ The Bishop of Manchester declined however, explaining in a letter to Williams that it would be inappropriate for a bishop to be publicly siding with a particular party. The Bishop's decision had also been motivated by political reasons, for, although he agreed with some of the party's objectives, he believed that the party was 'too middle class and too intellectual' to generate support amongst the traditional working-class Labour supporters and would only spilt the anti-Conservative vote.¹⁰⁵ Similar sentiments were felt by BSR Chairman Giles Ecclestone, who deemed that the SDP's strategy carried much risk for it assumed that the electorate was prepared to support 'a middle way' at a time when politics had morphed into 'ideological simplicity, slogans and scapegoats'. He concluded, with some regret, that the SDP would have little hope of rectifying the situation.¹⁰⁶

Clearly there was no fixed alliance between the SDP-Alliance and the Church, however their philosophical and discursive links are important as they indicate how the newly formed third party and the established Church of England operated as upholders of the *via media* in British political life during the 1980s. With the Conservative and Labour

¹⁰⁰ Crewe & King, *SDP*, p.127.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.134.

¹⁰² This figure is the combined percentage of those that supported both the SDP and the Liberal parties: see Appendix VIII for full figures.

¹⁰³ MCL, BCP, Z Files, 2/01 Politics, National File, Letter from Shirley Williams, 27 January 1981. Although at this stage a new party had not been announced, Williams makes clear that this was the likely outcome. For an insight into William's understanding of faith and politics, see Shirley Williams, 'The Church and Politics' in Donald Reeves (ed.), *The Church and the State* (London, 1984), pp.25-37.

¹⁰⁴ The Limehouse Declaration is reprinted in Crewe & King, *SDP*, p.93-4.

¹⁰⁵ MCL, BCP, Z Files, 2/01 Politics, National File, Reply to Shirley Williams, 3 February 1981.

¹⁰⁶ Giles Ecclestone, 'Facing the Future', *Crucible*, (April-June 1981), p.50, p.51.

parties both vacating the middle space, this decade saw the centrist mantle taken up by other members of the liberal elite. As David Martin has explained, the Church along with the SDP-Alliance, one-Nation Tories, the BBC, some parts of the press and other professions provided a crucial bulwark against Thatcherism in the eighties:

These institutions have always managed to keep any extremism in check and have usually tamed any signs of ideological dogmatism or intense religiosity. They are for the values of liberal education and against the technologization propagated by the government. The clergy, the teachers, and the social/administrative professions are aligned together in the support groups of the upper-middle-class liberal establishment. This establishment and the government are now fighting it out for control.¹⁰⁷

These actors, although motivated by different prejudices and traditions, were united in a desire to reinstate the centre ground. Emerging out of the widespread disaffection felt towards the body politic in the 1970s, these voices soon crystallised their attack on Thatcherism and together offered an important centrist challenge, however moderate and disparate, to the Conservative government. It was characterised by a belief in the inclusive and the consensual nature of Britain's social democracy and fed into the non-partisan, non-radical and specifically, non-class based traditions of the British Establishment. These values may have been dismissed by those on the right as 'wet' and by those on the left as 'patrician', however, it was a discourse which had a strong precedent in British political and religious history. There is also evidence that those that pursued the centre-ground, did so within an explicitly ethical and religious framework. One-Nation Conservatives rooted their social concern in Christian ideals just as much as the Alliance.¹⁰⁸ Also important was the establishment of a non-partisan newspaper the *Independent*, which quickly surpassed the right-wing *Times* as the Anglican clergy's favoured broadsheet and became notable for its ethical language and outlook.¹⁰⁹ Of all the members of the liberal Establishment, however, it

¹⁰⁷ Martin, 'The Churches: Pink Bishops and the Iron Lady', p.340; Stephen Haseler viewed this alliance as a 'uniquely English fusion between an old landed interest and a developing collectivism': Stephen Haseler, *The Battle For Britain: Thatcher and the New Liberals* (London, 1989), p.14.

¹⁰⁸ Francis Pym, *The Politics of Consent* (London, 1984); Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma. Britain under Thatcherism* (London, 1992); Stephen Evans, 'The Earl of Stockton's Critique of Thatcherism', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 1998, Vol.51, No.1, pp.17-35. Edward Heath had written the foreword to the 1976 of William Temple's *Christianity and Social Order* and later gave the annual William Temple Memorial lecture in 1981: YUL, BI, BP1/BLA/4/7, 8 October 1981.

¹⁰⁹ The *Independent* (est. 1986) was established as a non-party political newspaper. One of its founders was Andreas Whittam Smith, the son of an Anglican vicar, would later become a Church Commissioner. It is perhaps significant that all three founders of the *Independent* had originally worked at the Conservative *Daily Telegraph*: Michael Crozier, *The Making of the Independent* (London, 1988).

was the Church who proved to be the most important and effective enunciators of the centrist position during the Thatcher decade.

The reason for this has been analysed by historian Brian Harrison who posits the Church of England as one of the key reasons for the predominance of consensus and centralism throughout British history.¹¹⁰ Harrison situates the emergence of this tradition in the sixteenth century and the Elizabethan religious settlement, which, by pursuing the doctrinal middle road between Catholicism and Puritanism, 'helped to set the tone by exemplifying the *via media*'. This contribution, Harrison argues, has continued into the twentieth century, whereby the Church of England bishops consistently acted as important articulators of these values, particularly in respect to class relations. The British political system, in Harrison's view, is predisposed to centrism chiefly through two means: firstly, it is deployed by the two main parties to garner mass electoral support. Secondly, it is pursued by those non-political mechanisms of state such as the civil service, the monarchy, the judiciary and the Church which act as 'institutional pressures towards consensus' nudging the political debate in this direction at moments when the centre ground has been pursued by politicians (like in the postwar years) and, most prominently, when it has been abandoned by the political parties (as in the 1980s).¹¹¹ Harrison was right; although individual bishops may have held strong partisan convictions, this was to an extent irrelevant, for in tone and content the Church of England remained tied to its centralist tradition.¹¹² To a certain extent, therefore, the Church of England was almost predestined and predisposed to adopt a liberal and consensual line when confronted with the political polarisation of the 1980s.

This is most pertinently demonstrated in the way in which the Anglican leadership denounced political ideology (of both left and right) as amoral and upheld pragmatism and consensus as the righteous Christian approach. David Jenkins, for example, in his notorious enthronement sermon had condemned the rigidity of both the government and the unions as heretical while he had positioned reconciliation as a Christian endeavour: 'Mutually worked out compromise', the Bishop proclaimed, was the 'essence both of true godliness and of true humanity. Anyone who rejects compromise as a matter of policy, programme or

¹¹⁰ Brian Harrison, 'The Rise, Fall and Rise of Political Consensus in Britain since 1940', *History*, Vol.84, No.274, (April 1999), p.308. Harrison's analysis mirrors Arthur Marwick's notion of 'secular Anglicanism' as aforementioned in the introduction of this thesis.

¹¹¹ Harrison, 'The Rise, Fall and Rise', p.309.

¹¹² The Bishop of Birmingham was a Liberal and the Bishop of Manchester was a Labour party supporter for example.

conviction is putting himself or herself in the place of God.’¹¹³ Significantly, Jenkins linked liberal political values with liberal Christianity judging that both were correctly based on compromise rather than theological absolutes: ‘We have no right to expect a church which will guarantee us infallible comfort’ or ‘a Bible which will assure us of certain truth’, he told the congregation.¹¹⁴ Politics, like theology, he pertained, should not be based on uncompromising dogma but on continual negotiation. Even if Jenkins was not consciously trying to do so, his sermon was an affront to both the conviction politics of Thatcherism and the rigid ecclesiastical outlook of the Anglican traditionalists.

At the time, this non-partisan centrist position seemed to be most successfully embodied in the partnership of Anglican David Sheppard and Catholic Derek Worlock in Liverpool. The long history of religious tensions in that city meant that their close relationship had a particular importance in a community still largely defined by its religious make-up. During the 1980s, Sheppard and Worlock’s role in uniting the areas blighted by the riots (1981 and 1985), during the city’s industrial and council disputes and in the wake of the Heysel and Hillsborough disasters, meant that their spiritual partnership became a symbol of healing and unity in an era of intense social and political upheaval for the city.¹¹⁵ Of particular interest here was their intervention during the rates crisis (1984/5) between the Labour council and the Conservative government.

With the red flag flying high from Liverpool City Hall, the Militant Labour-run council embodied the kind of municipal socialism that Mrs Thatcher so despised.¹¹⁶ Tensions between the council and the government had come to a head in 1984 over the setting of the rate. When the council produced a budget with an illegal deficit, the district auditors took it to court. The following autumn in 1985, with the coffers completely empty of funds, the city’s leadership decided, in a bold act of political miscalculation, to deliver redundancy notices to 31, 000 of its workforce via hired taxis round the city: a political stunt which cost them the support of the unions, the Labour party and the city’s religious leaders.

Worlock and Sheppard had initially supported the council’s high spending budget believing it necessary to channel large-scale public funds into the city’s deprived areas. But

¹¹³ Jenkins, *God, Politics and the Future*, p.7.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5-6.

¹¹⁵ MCA, WP, Series 13, Box X, A Toxteth Riots; David Sheppard & Derek Worlock, *Better Together. Christian Partnership in a Hurt City* (Harmondsworth, 1989); John Furnival & Ann Knowles, *Archbishop Derek Worlock. His Personal Journey* (London, 1998).

¹¹⁶ For a history of the Liverpool Militants, see Michael Crick, *The March of the Militant* (London, 1986); Derek Hatton, *Insider Left: The Story So Far* (London, 1988); Peter Taaffe & Tony Mulhearn, *Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight* (London, 1988); Stewart Lansley, Sue Goss & Christian Wolmar, *Councils in Conflict: the Rise and Fall of the Municipal Left* (Basingstoke, 1989).

their support soon dissipated amidst the council's (particularly deputy-leader Derek Hatton's) rather cavalier approach to the crisis. In May 1984, both leaders had offered to aid the negotiations, believing, with some justification, that they were more likely to receive a sympathetic hearing from Whitehall than 'Hatton's Army'. While Sheppard and Worlock engaged in fruitful dialogue with a supportive Secretary of State, Patrick Jenkin, they became increasingly frustrated with the council and suspicious that its leadership were more concerned with furthering their own particular brand of socialism than in protecting the interests of the city.¹¹⁷ In the wake of the redundancy fiasco, Worlock and Sheppard penned a joint piece for *The Times* outlining how the conflict between the government and the Militants was rooted in a dogmatic and divisive politics to the detriment of the citizens of Liverpool.¹¹⁸ These sentiments were enthusiastically endorsed by the *Liverpool Echo* which considered that the religious leaders' stance would be welcomed by all of those 'who put the interests of the city above any considerations of political advantage'.¹¹⁹ It was no coincidence that *The Times* piece was published on the same day that Neil Kinnock was due to address his party's conference. The Christian leaders, it seems, had correctly judged the political mood. Significantly, Neil Kinnock deployed exactly the same language and sentiments in his speech to delegates that afternoon, condemning the Liverpool councillors for prioritising 'rigid dogma' over the wellbeing and employment of its workers.¹²⁰ Kinnock's conference speech marked an important turning point, when the party's leadership finally asserted its authority over its radical fringe members.¹²¹

Derek Hatton later reflected that, although the council had initially received the endorsement of Worlock and Sheppard, 'when views polarised, and there was no middle ground left on which to stand, we lost their support'.¹²² Viewing in terms of an ideological battle on which there was no fence to sit, Hatton dismissed the religious leaders for cowardly siding with the government when the negotiations came to a head. For Patrick Jenkin, however, there was genuine appreciation for Sheppard and Worlock's position. Jenkin, always more of a 'wet' than his fellow Cabinet members, had been prepared to be quite accommodating during the rates crisis, despite the hard-line taken publicly by the Prime Minister. He related these feelings of frustration in a letter to Derek Worlock, in

¹¹⁷ Specifically it was the Militant's unwillingness to work with local religious voluntary organisations and its appointment of Sam Bond, a London-based Militant, as the council's Race-Relations Advisor, which led Sheppard and Worlock to conclude that the council was being entirely led by a political agenda.

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, 1 October 1985.

¹¹⁹ *Liverpool Echo*, 1 October 1985.

¹²⁰ Extract of Kinnock's speech, quoted in Derek Hatton, *Inside Left: The Story So Far....* (London, 1988), p.102.

¹²¹ Hatton and others were eventually expelled from the party in June 1986.

¹²² Hatton, *Inside Left*, p.106.

which he praised the ecumenical collaboration between Catholics and Protestants in Liverpool as a worthy example which politicians should take note of: ‘The way your clergy and congregations are able to work together should be an inspiration to the politicians – an inspiration to which perhaps too few of us are ready to pay heed.’¹²³ Jenkin was not only the one to contrast the liberal and consensual spirit between denominations with the rigid ideology between political parties in this period.

Worlock and Sheppard’s intervention on this occasion could easily be dismissed as politically naïve but there was no doubting that it was publicly important, not only because of the respect that they were accorded in Whitehall but more importantly the credibility and support they maintained within the local community. This is largely down to the fact that they were representatives of one of the most religiously-devout cities in Britain.¹²⁴ When Sheppard and Worlock claimed to speak on behalf of the citizens of Liverpool, therefore, they were to a degree, speaking the truth.¹²⁵ Such sentiments are revealed in one letter written to Worlock soon after the rates crisis from a Catholic female parishioner residing in Liverpool 8, the district at the centre of the Toxteth riots and one of the poorest parts of the city. Labelling herself part of the ‘real silent majority’, she praised Worlock and Sheppard as the ‘only champions we have’ and condemned the lack of fellowship in the City and in the nation as a whole: ‘if there is no legal code there surely must be a moral code, what will they answer to God when he says, “but you are your brother’s keeper.”’ She suggested that Worlock should organise a ceremony of reconciliation, a ‘open air service of all denominations, cultures, creeds’ to help heal the wounds of ‘strife and depression’, judging that in times of political crisis, spiritual intervention would provide hope and bring people together. It was her religious representative rather than her political representatives, it seems, who spoke on her behalf, in both a political and spiritual context.¹²⁶

As has been documented in earlier chapters, the Anglican hierarchy consistently made claims about its capacity to speak on behalf of the voiceless. *Faith in the City* was proof that they were able to perform this duty with some degree of success, yet the example of Sheppard and Worlock’s in Liverpool suggests that this was only truly achievable in places

¹²³ MCA, WP, Series 13, Box X, B/2 Liverpool Rate Crisis 1984, Letter from Patrick Jenkin, 8 October 1985.

¹²⁴ Anglican attendance in Merseyside was 14 per cent amongst the adult population, four per cent higher than the average in England: Peter Brierley, *Prospects for the Nineties. Trends and Tables from the English Church Census* (London, 1991), pp.156-9. Grace Davie also sees Liverpool as an exceptional case, not only because of the continual strength of worship but also because the city was still largely defined by its religious culture: Davie, *Believing without Belonging*, p.163.

¹²⁵ Lee & Stanford, *Believing Bishops*, pp.131-6.

¹²⁶ MCA, WP, Series 13, Box X, B/2 Liverpool Rate Crisis 1984, Letter from parishioner (name withheld), 10 October 1985.

with a high churchgoing constituency and where sectarian divisions ensured that citizens still largely defined themselves by their religious identity. Liverpool, in this sense, was an exceptional case, having more in common with Glasgow and Belfast than with other parts of the UK. Nevertheless, Sheppard and Worlock in Liverpool had a standing and a significance beyond that of David Jenkins in Durham or even Robert Runcie as the supreme spiritual representatives, which ultimately points to the limitations of the Church of England's social witness and its reliance on a 'folk Christianity' within the nation.

IV. An Assessment: The Church and Political Theology in the 1980s

The importance of the Church's contribution in the 1980s lies not in its impact on policy for there is little evidence that its message was listened to by the government, even when the bishops directly intervened, as in the miners' strike. Despite mounting criticisms from the Anglican prelates, Mrs Thatcher continued to steam roll her way through the reform of public services, industry and the economy. Rather, the significance of the Church's intervention lies in the way in which it subjected government action to Christian scrutiny and successfully injected a moral framework into discussions about poverty, welfare and wealth creation; a contribution, which was valid, unique and respected. The weakness of the Labour party largely explains why the Church emerged as a crucial opposition at a time when the political parties were polarised and the values of centrism needed reinstating. As the suffragan Bishop of Stepney, Jim Thompson pointed out in a letter to David Sheppard soon after the Dimbleby lecture in 1984:

Above all – I'm proud to be associated with it [Anglicanism] wrestling with the great issues.....Compared with the simplistic polarities of the politicians, the simplistic slogans of the ignorant, and the profit simplistic motives of the Boardroom, your lecture was deep and comprehensive.....if I get to retirement in 20 years time I shall say to my grandchildren (should I be so lucky) that I was part of this battle.¹²⁷

The Bishop was right the Anglican 'battle' would be remembered twenty years later. Writing in 2000, academic and former civil servant, Nicholas Deakin relayed his surprise that the greatest resistance to the Thatcher government had come from an unexpected quarter: 'God came into it, or at least the Church of England did; my first encounter, as an

¹²⁷ LCA, SP, Publications Box 5, 'The Other Britain' Folder, Letter from Jim Thompson, 28 April 1984. Underlining is Thompson's own.

unbeliever, with that church in a militant frame of mind.¹²⁸ Deakin was not the only ‘unbeliever’ who welcomed this intervention; indeed the Church often received a more favourable reception from non-Christians than it did from its own constituency. This shared agenda between the churches and the secular left would eventually lead to ‘valuable alliances’ being forged on issues concerning social justice.¹²⁹

Undoubtedly *Faith in the City* stands out as the greatest example of Christian social commentary during this period.¹³⁰ It fulfilled its aim of alerting both the politicians and public to the plight of the nation’s cities, which is evidenced by the fact that urban poverty featured prominently in the 1987 election manifestos of all parties. After the Conservatives had secured victory, Mrs Thatcher declared her intention to ‘sort out’ the inner cities, although this would be through private enterprise rather than greater public investment.¹³¹ *Faith in the City* performed the function of a Royal Commission in an era when this method of enquiry had all but been abandoned by the Conservative government.¹³² As Lord Scarman confirmed in the Lords in 1987: ‘In the long-run, it will take its place, I believe, as a classic description of one of the most serious troubles in British society.’¹³³ In the opinion of Frank Field, *Faith in the City* could claim a much bigger achievement, for it had successfully punctured the Thatcherite hegemony and forced the electorate ‘to consider that, even if there wasn’t an obviously acceptable alternative to Thatcherism, one should at least be sought.’¹³⁴ Field’s analysis was right; although the Church may have been short on solutions, its spiritual objections help mould the public perception of Thatcherism as unchristian and fuelled debates about a possible alternative.

The Church’s impact can also be seen in the way that Christianity emerged as the language of opposition to Thatcherism, deployed periodically by the Alliance, one-Nation Tories and eventually the Labour Party. Alan Beith’s comment in 1989 that the government had ‘adopted the concept of “passing by on the other side” as an objective of public policy’ was typical of the way in which opposition parties tended to draw upon Christian ethics to

¹²⁸ Nicholas Deakin, *In Search of Civil Society* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.xv.

¹²⁹ Nicholas Deakin, *Faith in the City* Witness Seminar, p.25.

¹³⁰ An equally illuminating document was *Faith in the Countryside* (London, 1990), which sought to address rural poverty and the problems of maintaining a rural ministry. It was chaired by Lord Prior but did not incite the same level of debate that its urban counterpart did: Robin Gill, *Christian Ethics in Secular Worlds* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp.45-61.

¹³¹ Nicholas Deakin & John Edwards, *The Enterprise Culture and the Inner City* (London, 1993).

¹³² The Thatcher government abandoned the Standing Royal Commission, which reported on the changing distribution of income and wealth, abolished the supplementary Benefits Commission and curtailed the remit of the General Household Survey.

¹³³ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 2 February 1987, Vol.484, col.14.

¹³⁴ Field, *Politics of Paradise*, p.118.

denounce the proposed moral failings of Thatcherite Conservatism.¹³⁵ As the Labour party embraced the social market economy, so moral (rather than economic arguments) became the chief means through which it countered the Thatcher legacy. With Clause IV abandoned, 'we are our brother's keeper' became one of the key slogans of the reformulation of progressive politics in Britain in the aftermath of Cold War.¹³⁶ These Christian concepts may have been largely divorced from their institutional or even Biblical origins, but this language continued to be deployed by politicians in the name of statutory welfare and as the rationale behind the curtailment of global capitalism.

That the Church was able to have such an impact in the 1980s was largely down to the position it was still granted by the political elite and in the media. Irrespective of whether the reporting was supportive, condemnatory or ridiculing, the attention given to Anglican affairs in the press was a key factor which enabled the Church to play a part in the politics of the 1980s. Equally important was the respect and contact that the Church enjoyed with those in Parliament and Whitehall. The bishops had access to the corridors of power which no other faiths or pressure groups enjoyed. In terms of numbers, influence and scope, the Church of England was a substantive political force; more credible and less militant than the trade unions and with a grass-roots support which other voices of opposition such as one-Nation Conservatives, the SDP-Alliance or the poverty lobby, could only dream of. The fact remained that weekly Church attendances gave the Anglican clergy a bigger audience than most newspapers, particularly in the Conservative heartlands. It was hardly surprising therefore, that the party's leadership took its opposition seriously.

Undoubtedly, the Church's educational mission directed at 'comfortable Britain' had mixed results, yet as Rev. Anthony Harvey has correctly surmised, these endeavours were not entirely in vain. *Faith in the City* had meant that Christian social activism was no longer confined to a small group of left-wing clergy, but became 'something in which the Church as a whole could feel that it might be involved'.¹³⁷ Of equal importance was the Church as an agent in civil society. There is little doubt that the Church's charitable role and responsibilities had modified with the formation of the welfare state. In the opinion of historian Frank Prochaska, universal statutory aid had rid parishes and religious voluntary

¹³⁵ *Parl. Debs*, HC Debs, 13 February 1989, Vol.147, col.36.

¹³⁶ At the 1995 Labour Party conference, having successfully dropped Clause IV, Tony Blair addressed the party faithful setting out what he considered to be the moral rather than economic vision of socialism: 'Socialism to me was never about nationalisation or the power of the state. It is a moral purpose to life, a set of values, a belief in society, in co-operation. It is how I try to live my life; the simple truths. I am worth no more than any other man, I am my brother's keeper, I will not walk by on the other side.': <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/blair-in-his-own-words-417732.html> (accessed 10/09/09).

¹³⁷ *Faith in the City* Witness Seminar transcript, p.22.

organisations of their *raison d'être* leading to the eventual decline of the social and ultimately, the spiritual importance of the churches in postwar Britain. Yet an analysis of the 1980s demonstrates the continual vigour of the church's pastoral role. Its efforts, be it in the mining communities during the strike, its MSC-funded schemes for the unemployed, or the role of the local priest in areas affected by the riots, were all a reflection of the substantive contribution that the local parishes made in a period of social and economic unrest. The welfare state, therefore, changed rather than entirely negated the role of the local parish and priest. For still, even in the 1980s, with declining industry and changing public services, it represented one of the few but important sources of support in the community, entirely independent from the tentacles of the state. The rhetorical emphasis on 'community', 'society' and 'nation', therefore, were not empty concepts, but wholly steeped in reality and experience.

Anglican social prophecy was rooted in an understanding that the Church should speak out on matters of social injustice rather than adopt a position of silent compliance. In this regard, Anglican leaders maintained, however, that it was the role of the Church to talk in terms of principles rather than specifics. This drew on William Temple's understanding of 'middle axioms' namely that it was the Church's responsibility to promote key rights such as education, housing and welfare, on which a Christian social order was based.¹³⁸ Temple had believed that it was appropriate for the Church to defend these values, but not to advocate the specific means of achieving them. Churchmen soon found that in the politically-heated atmosphere of the 1980s, it was almost impossible to talk in vague and restrictive terms, not least because Temple's middle axioms were inextricably tied to a political consensus which was no longer accepted by the political class, the public or many within the Church.¹³⁹ Some Anglican activists, for example, berated their leaders for peddling generalities, which they considered an inadequate theological armoury for priests working in the industrial heartlands of Britain.¹⁴⁰ David Sheppard admitted as much in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph* in 1984: 'In many ways I'd rather stick to general principles', he stated, 'though what then happens is that you are preaching 10 feet above the contradiction. You don't understand what's right or wrong until you've been down into the

¹³⁸ William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (London, 1976 edition). The concept of 'middle axioms' was first set out by J.H. Oldham.

¹³⁹ This period saw widespread discussion within theological circles on whether 'middle axioms' were an appropriate doctrinal approach to adopt, see for example, Forrester, *Beliefs, Values and Policies*; Preston, *Church and Society*; Atherton, *Faith in the Nation: A Christian Vision for Britain* (London, 1988).

¹⁴⁰ See for example, Ian Gaskell, 'Rotherham and Barnsley: A parable of Coal and Steel', *Crucible*, (July-September 1985), pp.111-114.

jungle.¹⁴¹ One of the chief reasons for *Faith in the City*'s success was the way in which it had dealt with the specifics of a political problem, yet one its main flaws was the vague theological position underpinning it. In many respects, the Anglican leadership of the 1980s failed to formulate a coherent political-theology that took into account the new political and secular landscape.¹⁴² Despite pressure from radical Christians to go further, the Church hierarchy remained steeped in the traditions of social Anglicanism, liberal Establishment values and the postwar consensus, and for this reason, its response to Thatcherism remained inherently limited. The established Church always had been, and continued to be, shaped by its ties to the state and thus remained in personalities, ethos and membership, politically middle-of-the-road.

A further problem was that the Church's prophecy was predicated on an assumption that there remained a national Christian consensus centred on socio-democratic values. As Paul Ballard and Malcolm Brown have pointed out, this was an implicit understanding of the privileged place of Christianity and the Church, as well as an expectation that both Christians and 'people of good will' spoke in common dialogue on these matters.¹⁴³ This presumption was fundamentally flawed however, as it incorrectly assumed a political as well as a spiritual unity within British society. Mrs Thatcher's period in office undermined the political basis of this concept, while increasing secularism and the growth of religious pluralism would eventually render the notion of a Christian unity largely redundant. Reflecting in 2005, the Rev. Anthony Harvey admitted that this premise had perhaps been ill-conceived:

We were being naïve in the sense that it looked as though we could preface all that we were saying not only to the Church, but the nation on theological grounds. That would be extremely questionable now, but perhaps it was questionable then.¹⁴⁴

According to theologian Duncan Forrester, the Church found itself defending values which were no longer accepted in society, while at the same time its leadership seemed unwilling to directly address the problems caused by increasing secularism.¹⁴⁵ Modern social Anglicanism, Forrester unwillingly concluded, had been an attempt to shoehorn Christian

¹⁴¹ 'No.1 Who Looks after the Others', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 1984.

¹⁴² A running theme in Duncan Forrester in *Beliefs, Values and Policies*.

¹⁴³ Ballard & Brown, *The Church and Economic Life*, p.185.

¹⁴⁴ Rev. Canon Harvey, *Faith in the City* witness seminar, p.20.

¹⁴⁵ Forrester, *Christianity and the Future of Welfare*, pp.62-66.

values around the new secular climate, rather than challenging the new values of contemporary secular society.¹⁴⁶

In theoretical terms, Forrester was right. Yet his analysis does not give due consideration to the actual players involved in this process. For the generation of clergy of the 1980s, socio-democratic values were religious and not simply political convictions. Any analysis of the speeches, sermons and literature from this period demonstrates how these values were not conceived as a political consensus, but as a moral consensus on which the future of Christianity in Britain would be determined. Such sentiments were conveyed in a memo produced by BSR committee member, Dr Michael Bayley soon after the 1987 election. Bayley reflected that Britain had undergone a 'sea-change' in national values in the eighties with the 'solidarity' of the postwar years having been replaced with a 'nineteenth century ethic of individualism'. This transition, Bayley argued, would have serious ramifications for the Church and the Christian faith in Britain, for, as the 'communal and broadly Christian values had been taken out of the political structure,.....religion was now only a matter for the private sphere.'¹⁴⁷

Historians such as Hugh McLeod and Callum Brown have shown how the social and cultural shifts of the 1960s marked a sharp turning point in the religious history of the nation, triggering the secularisation of British society and the collapse of the public and private influence of Christianity. Moral philosophers, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, in a similar vein, have argued that the moral unity of British society had been eroded in the 1960s to the extent that Christian values were now at variance rather than in tune with British societal values.¹⁴⁸ This analysis points to the way that important sections of the established Church still believed that Christian values remained at the centre of the nation's politics, with the Thatcher years witnessing the renewed prominence of the Church as it rallied to protect these principles. This, however, was to be short-lived, representing what could be deemed an 'Indian summer' for public Anglicanism, as the Church gradually realised that these values and approach were no longer tenable in a politically and religiously reformed nation.

As political philosopher Raymond Plant has correctly analysed, the weakness of the Anglican critique of Thatcherism was not only due to a strict adherence to an out-of-date religio-political outlook, but also because Anglican prophecy increasingly took its

¹⁴⁶ Forrester, *Beliefs, Values and Policies: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age*, ch.3.

¹⁴⁷ LPL, BSRP, SPC 1988, M/7, Michael Bayley, 'A Christian Perspective on the welfare state', 17-18 June 1988.

¹⁴⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue; a study in Moral Theology* (London, 1981).

inspiration from secular sociological theories. In an essay written in 1985, Plant wondered what was precisely ‘theological’ about the Church’s prophecy, which in his view, amounted to a simplistic reinforcement of more powerful and complex political theories:

It is not clear what the Church is adding, for example, to a theory of redistributive justice of its own, and one is left with the despair of feeling that one is looking for the odd bit of theological backing for one’s political preferences which are held on quite other grounds.¹⁴⁹

Expanding on this theme at a meeting of the BSR in 1988, Plant informed delegates that whereas the New Right philosophy had an ‘internal coherence’, the Christian social thought being used to counter it was theologically and philosophically weak.¹⁵⁰ Plant was right, the Church had wheeled out an outdated vision rather than generating a considered theological redress to the New Right. It was also guilty of exaggerating, simplifying and sometimes misrepresenting Thatcherism. This is a point which sociologist Ray Pahl, member of the *Faith in the City* commission, has also since acknowledged:

The radical right had a much more coherent intellectual framework than we had granted it, and we should have taken that full on.....we assumed that all right-thinking people would come round to our position if only we expressed it clearly enough. That was a failure.¹⁵¹

One of the deficiencies of social Anglicanism in the 1980s was its refusal to accept that those on the right were also arguing from a legitimate Biblical basis: a fact, which many Christian activists dismissed outright. This ultimately points to the ‘illiberal’ nature of liberal Anglicanism in the 1980s. It was the tendency to project theo-political values as undeniable Biblical truths while at the same time show a complete intolerance to alternative political theologies, which so incensed Conservative Anglican voters and the wider traditional Anglican movement. As conservative evangelical Rev. Tony Higton confirmed, Church leaders were guilty of both providing simplistic answers to complex questions and making it almost impossible for those who disagreed to express different views.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Raymond Plant, ‘The Anglican Church and the Secular State’ in George Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today*, p.329.

¹⁵⁰ LPL, BSRP, SPC, 1988, M/7, Minutes of the Social Policy Committee, 17-18 June 1988, p.2-3; Raymond Plant, *Politics, Theology and History* (New York, 2001).

¹⁵¹ Ray Pahl, *Faith in the City* Witness Seminar, p.13-4.

¹⁵² Tony Higton in Tingle, *Another Gospel?*, p.5-6. Higton was founder of conservative evangelical organisation Action for the Biblical Witness to our Nation.

All of this was true, yet in many ways it was precisely this intransigency which forced many on the Christian right to develop their own theological understanding, for, as one commentator observed in respect to the New Right: 'Without a vigorous challenge, it would have developed no rationale other than expediency. In truth, it is the challenges of the Anglican bishops, notably the Bishop of Durham but also the Bishop of Liverpool, which have shaped Thatcherism.'¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Lee & Stanford, *Believing Bishops*, p.105.

CHAPTER FIVE

Private Faith and Public Doctrine: The Christian Roots of the New Right

'[The] Uncoordinated conjunction of libertarianism and authoritarianism, scepticism and belief, doctrine and resistance to doctrine, high culture and dislike of high culture, economic truth and disdain for economic truth, which, under conflicting guidance from Hayek, Oakshott, Butterfield, Leavis, Eliot, Powell and Mrs Thatcher, has constituted the New Right of the last twenty-five years.' Maurice Cowling, 1990.¹

'it is one thing for the world to reject the standards taught by the Church, another for the Church herself to surrender those standards.' Peter Moore, 1983.²

'It was the state that crucified Christ.' Robert Key MP, 1988.³

The need to precisely define 'Thatcherism' has been a major preoccupation for scholars, commentators and historians ever since the term was invented.⁴ Much of this debate has centred on whether Thatcherism was a modernised version of nineteenth-century Liberalism, an Anglicanised translation of American Neo-Conservatism or simply a reflection of the prejudices and aspirations of the Tory grassroots.⁵ Some however have questioned its ideological make-up, arguing that Conservative policy was largely determined by pragmatism rather than theory. Despite these conflicting interpretations, there is a consensus that Thatcherism combined the doctrines of economic liberalism with a socially conservative agenda.⁶ The aim here is not to rehearse these arguments but to shed further light on the nature of Thatcherism by examining it through the lens of religion. The Christian inspiration behind the New Right and the importance of Christian doctrine to Mrs Thatcher has scarcely been examined by scholars and historians. Although comparisons are frequently made between the Right in Britain and America during this period, the religious parallels, which are admittedly less obvious, are frequently overlooked. It is assumed that the legitimisation and support that the Republican Party received from evangelical Christian churches was not enjoyed by the Conservatives in secular Britain.⁷ The task of this chapter is twofold; firstly, to show how Christianity was central to the revitalisation of the New Right in Britain, and secondly, to demonstrate the challenge that Conservatism posed to liberal Anglicanism in this era.

¹ Maurice Cowling, preface to *Mill and Liberalism* (Cambridge, 2nd edition, 1990), p.xl.

² Peter Moore, 'Tradition and Worship', *The Salisbury Review*, Issue 4, (Summer, 1983), p.4.

³ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 13 February 1989, Vol.147, col.50.

⁴ Richard Vinen has pointed out that the term 'Thatcherism' dates back to mid-1970s: Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p.4.

⁵ See the introduction for a full breakdown of the historiography on Thatcherism.

⁶ King, *The New Right: Politics, Markets and Citizenship*.

⁷ Gillian Peele 'Culture, Religion and Morality' in Andrew Adonis & Tim Hames (eds.), *A Conservative Revolution?: The Thatcher-Reagan Decade in Perspective* (Manchester, 1994), pp.67-88.

The British Conservative movement has always been a conglomerate of influences, ideas, policies and personalities, and in this regard, the New Right, which emerged in the seventies, was no exception. This chapter will therefore begin with a dissection of the various factions which constituted the conservative revival in British public life in the 1970s, from the cluster of Conservative academics debating philosophy in the common room of Peterhouse College, Cambridge to the suburban middle-class women (and men) who made the annual trip to the AGM of Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers' and Listeners' Association. These groups may on the surface seem worlds apart, yet in fact they shared definite aims, ideas and grievances, not least a traditionalist rather than liberal perspective on the Christian faith.⁸ The second section of this chapter will focus on the Conservative parliamentary party, showing how Christian Conservatives sympathised with the New Right's critique of liberal Anglicanism and how they pursued traditionalist Anglican causes in Parliament. The aim is to demonstrate how the conflict between Church and the Conservative party did not simply concern politics, but involved diametrically opposed views on morality, theology and ecclesiastical authority and, therefore, was inherently linked to the existing schism within Anglicanism between traditionalists and liberals.

I. Christianity and the New Right in Britain

During the 1970s Conservatism in Britain re-grouped, re-ordered and re-discovered itself, intellectually, culturally and finally, politically, with the defeat of Edward Heath and the election of Margaret Thatcher to the leadership of the Conservative party in 1975. As historian Maurice Cowling on the right and Stuart Hall on the left recognised, this period witnessed a paradigmatic shift in the cultural and intellectual milieu, which was a response to a series of events and concerns.⁹ Most significant in political terms was the economic crisis, which eventually saw proponents of economic liberalism achieve prominence within the party. Other extraneous factors included a concern about 'permissiveness' inspired by the cultural revolution of the 1960s, uncertainty about Britain's place in the world post-decolonisation and the deemed threat that immigration posed to a traditional and cohesive notion of Englishness. This was a mindset therefore which linked the social and moral with the economic and legal out of a desire to reformulate man's relationship with the state. It

⁸ It is important to remember that the New Right was not exclusively made up of Christians. As Cowling explained, the New Right contained: 'a smattering of atheists and agnostics, a few converted, a few practising and a few lapsed Catholics, a handful of Jews, observing or otherwise, some Dissenters and Evangelicals, a fair number of observing and a number of converted Anglicans, and a contingent for whom religion is of little significance.'; Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p.xxxvi.

⁹ Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving to the Right Show' in Hall & Jacques (eds.), *The Politics of Thatcherism*, pp.19-39; Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, preface.

was conceived therefore, that the joint forces of collectivism and the 'new morality' had given individuals too much personal responsibility in the private sphere and too little independence and liberty in the political domain.¹⁰ Though Cowling and Hall differed on the virtuousness of this re-branding of Conservatism, both were of the opinion that the 'Conservative turn' of the seventies paved the way for Thatcherism in the eighties.

In order to explain the precise interrelationship between Christianity and those on the right, the 'New Right' here is separated into five different groups. The first category is what will be termed the 'New Right intelligentsia'; those Conservative thinkers based at universities and journalists in the right-wing press. The second is the moral conservative movement; groups which pressured successive governments to enact greater restrictions on private morality. Third, are the economic liberals; those economists and commentators who were avid promoters of the free market, but independent of the Conservative party. Fourth, we have a faction which is rarely included in analyses of the New Right, but which shared many of its characteristics; the Anglican traditionalists. Their internal battle with the Church's liberal leadership would also greatly condition the Conservative party's engagement with ecclesiastical affairs in the 1980s. The fifth and final group is the Conservative parliamentary party, which, when in power, incorporated (sometimes unsatisfactorily) these various influences, under the project of Thatcherism.

New Right Intelligentsia

During the 1970s there emerged a small, but extremely vocal group of journalists and academics, who through their ideas and public prominence, bolstered the intellectual credibility of the conservative movement and provided the philosophical backdrop to Thatcherism. This group had no fixed membership, though a number of figures could be said to belong, including academics John Casey and Maurice Cowling, political philosophers Michael Oakeshott and Roger Scruton and journalists T.E. Utle, A.N. Wilson, *Spectator* editor Charles Moore and *Sunday Telegraph* editor, Peregrine Worsthorne.¹¹ Many of these were members of the Conservative Philosophy Group, an intellectual forum based at Peterhouse, Cambridge, which was attended by many Conservative MPs and even some

¹⁰ In the words of John Gummer, the twentieth century 'restricted and corseted us economically while leaving us more and more free to do as we like in bed.' John Gummer, *The Permissive Society: Fact or Fantasy?* (London, 1971), p.3.

¹¹ Charles Moore & Simon Heffer (eds.), *A Tory Seer: The Selected Journalism of T.E. Utle* (London, 1989); Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Harmondsworth, 1980); Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London, 1978); Charles Covell, *The Redefinition of Conservatism* (Basingstoke, 1986).

clerics.¹² Some of them came to be known as the ‘Young Fogeys’, so called because of their old fashioned dress and their conservative cultural tastes. The broadsheet right-wing press provided the channel through which their views filtered into the mainstream, although their principal vehicle was *The Salisbury Review*, a journal founded in 1982 and edited by Roger Scruton.¹³

These intellectuals and journalists made a direct appeal to tradition in response to the perceived failure of modernism; an approach they applied not just to politics but also to culture, education, architecture and religion. In essence, theirs was a romantic view of conservatism inextricably tied to England. Most, but not all, shared a Whiggish understanding of the organic and harmonious nature of the English constitution. This stemmed from an appreciation of the English custom of social and political order, which was believed to be exemplified in the Conservative party. Suspicious of notions of human progress or promises of abstract political theory, they were particularly interested in countering leftist notions of equality and social justice.¹⁴ This was combined with a tangible sense of England (rather than Britain), which naturally conditioned their attitudes towards the EC, immigration, the end of empire and the nationalist causes of Britain’s Celtic fringe.¹⁵ These were ideas however considered in intellectual pursuit, and were far from being conceived as a practical political vision.

Mrs Thatcher would eventually come to draw on their idyllic nationalism, yet despite this clear influence, her government received a mixed reception from these public intellectuals. Broadly in sympathy with Mrs Thatcher’s emphasis on individualism, anti-collectivism, patriotism and anti-liberal elitism, they were less comfortable with her government’s libertarian ethos. As philosopher Roger Scruton explained, the difference between a libertarian and a conservative was that for the former the individual took precedence above anything, whereas for the latter, the individual could only flourish within the context of the social order.¹⁶ Scruton had highlighted a key point, for, as we shall see, the tension between the libertarian and conservative components of Thatcherism would

¹² The group was founded in 1975 by Dr John Casey and Roger Scruton. Conservative MPs that attended included Hugh Fraser and Jonathan Aitken: John Casey, ‘Welcome back to the forum where Thatcher and Powell argued’, *Spectator*, 17 March 2007, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3724/is_200703/ai_n18736897/ (accessed 10/02/10).

¹³ *Salisbury Review*; Roger Scruton (ed.), *Conservative Texts. An Anthology* (Basingstoke, 1991).

¹⁴ Particularly influential was American philosopher Robert Nozick whose *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford, 1974) attacked the principle of social justice set out in John Rawls’s *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass, 1st edition, 1971).

¹⁵ T.E. Utey contended that there was no such thing as a Welsh, Scottish or Irish Conservative.

¹⁶ Roger Scruton, ‘Introduction’ in Scruton (ed.), *Conservative Texts*, pp.1-29.

continually be a source of conflict within the right throughout the 1980s.¹⁷ The New Right intelligentsia were also concerned with Mrs Thatcher's prioritising of the market, fearful that unbridled global capitalism would bring about irrevocable changes to the nation's landscape, culture and psyche. Generally speaking however, these public intellectuals viewed Mrs Thatcher to be pursuing a line in keeping with the Conservative tradition and their own philosophical priorities.

The main *bête noire* of the New Right intelligentsia was what was termed 'secular liberalism'.¹⁸ It was this prevailing orthodoxy, they argued, which had dominated Establishment thinking and produced the three main disasters of postwar British politics: the social-democratic consensus, the 'permissive' legislation and progressive education. For Maurice Cowling, secular liberal thought was embodied in the discipline of sociology, a subject governed by fleeting fashions and devoid of intellectual rigourousness.¹⁹ What Cowling and others most objected to was the inherent dogmatism within secular liberalism; the idea that, despite its 'liberal' credentials, it was on the contrary both uncompromising and inflexible. For these reasons, Cowling and others envisioned their cause against the orthodoxy of secular liberalism, rather than as a reintroduction of the former *status quo*.²⁰

Most, but not all, of this group were Anglicans (of the anglo-catholic variety) and were united in an understanding that faith operated as an essential source of authority, values and civil association within society, necessary for the preservation of the social order.²¹ It was thus deemed appropriate that Christian principles should be embodied in British law and its constitutional expression realised through the established Church. The major obstruction to this, they believed, was the way in which the liberal ecclesiastical hierarchy had embraced the culture of secular liberalism at the expense of the Anglican tradition.²² Many within the New Right intelligentsia, therefore, shared the frustrations of Anglican traditionalists and were opposed to the modernisation of the liturgy, the ordination of women, and the Church's

¹⁷ Durham, *Sex and Politics*; King, *The New Right*.

¹⁸ This definition of 'secular liberalism' was distinct from libertarianism (meaning individual freedom). It referred to the social consensus and utilitarianism which had become the *status quo* in the 1960s.

¹⁹ This was an issue Cowling felt so strongly about that he campaigned against it becoming a degree-awarded subject at Cambridge University.

²⁰ Maurice Cowling's *Public Doctrine* volumes should be interpreted as an attempt to set out the history of the Christian Conservative intellectual challenge to modern secular liberal thought: Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine*, three vols.

²¹ Peregrine Worsthorne was a Catholic for example. A.N. Wilson had been originally destined for ordination, but left after his first year of theological college. In 1990 Wilson publicly stated he was an atheist, in April 2009 however, he claimed that he had rediscovered his faith.
<http://www.newstatesman.com/religion/2009/04/conversion-experience-atheism> (accessed 21/01/2010).

²² Scruton in *The Meaning of Conservatism* argued that the Church had a duty to operate as a unifier in society but that secularisation and the politicization of the Church leadership was a barrier to this. Scruton maintained, however, that the resurrection of the Church under such circumstances was a serious endeavour: Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, pp.170-75.

progressive political outlook. Throughout the 1980s therefore, the Church hierarchy (and some Catholic prelates) were on the receiving end of quite personal attacks from right-wing commentators, especially in *The Spectator*.

This critique of liberal Anglicanism owed much to Edward Norman's thesis on how the modern Church had gradually moulded itself around contemporary secular culture. This process, Norman judged, had seeped into all areas of Church life, including its governance and ministry and especially its politics.²³ Norman's judgement on modern Christianity, which was disseminated to a national audience in 1978 through his BBC Reith Lectures, was extremely influential and, as we shall see, the essence of his argument was rehearsed time and time again by traditionalist Anglicans, Anglican Conservative MPs, the moral lobby and New Right intellectuals on practically every occasion that liberal Anglicans sought to implement changes to the Church's ministry or speak out on political issues.²⁴ By the end of the 1980s, the consensus was that liberal Christianity had not heralded a new dawn for the Church and had instead produced a liturgy and worship which repelled rather than attracted the laity, a liberal theology which questioned the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and a politicised prophecy which owed more to sociology and socialism than Scripture. This was of course, an interpretation beset with generalisations, flaws and inaccuracies, but it remained a particularly forceful argument with which to attack the Church leadership.

The Moral Lobby

The New Right's intellectual critique of the secular liberal elite was to find popular expression in the grassroots moral conservative movement. The emergence of this crusade, as Andrew Holden has shown, preceded Mrs Thatcher's leadership by some ten years or more, for the backlash against the 'permissive legislation' was underway soon after the Royal Assent to these Acts had been granted.²⁵ The most notable and the largest in terms of membership, was Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, which was founded in 1965 and promptly achieved a membership of over 300,000.²⁶ This was in addition to pro-life groups, such as SPUC opposed to the 1967 Abortion Act and the Festival of Light (FoL), an evangelical Christian organisation, which combined missionary

²³ Norman, *Church and Society in England*; Norman, *Christianity and the World Order*.

²⁴ It should be noted here that Norman did not believe that the Church should opt out of politics altogether, only that there was a difference between politicised Christianity and a Church which reflected on political matters.

²⁵ Holden, *Makers and Morals*, chs.4-6.

²⁶ Machin, *Churches and Social Issues*, p.191.

activity with campaigns against obscenity and pornography.²⁷ The FoL's high point came in the form of two mass rallies held in London's Trafalgar Square in 1971 and 1973, both of which were attended by over 20,000 people and attracted the support of prominent lay Christians including the chairman of the Synod's House of Laity, Sir Norman Anderson, the evangelical industrialist Sir Fried Catherwood, and Catholic anti-obscenity campaigner 'Lord Porn' Longford.²⁸ The moral movement attracted support from all Christian denominations, however, it drew most of its strength from evangelical Christianity, which was undergoing a renaissance in this period. The FoL in particular should be seen as part of this evangelical revival, although only one aspect of it. For just as evangelicals such as FoL were evoking the pietistical tradition of individual conversion, others, such as David Sheppard, as we have seen, were rediscovering the social implications of the Word.

Moral conservative groups continued to flourish under the more favourable climate of the Thatcher administration in the 1980s, which saw Catholic mother and anti-contraception campaigner, Victoria Gillick, nearly stealing Mary Whitehouse's crown as the figurehead of the moral purity movement in Britain. Campaigning groups of this kind were hardly a new phenomenon in British history.²⁹ Organisations such as the NVLA, however, were specifically in response to legal and social changes of the 1960s, in a belief that the liberalisation of the law and the prevailing counterculture had unleashed a wave of moral and sexual depravity that was corrupting the nation's youth and destroying the social fabric of society. Their missionary efforts, therefore, were to a large extent, directed at legislators rather than the populace with the rationale being that restrictive laws guiding ethical conduct were essential for keeping society's moral virtue in check. Moral campaigners such as Whitehouse, Gillick and Lord Longford obtained a prominence in public life not seen since the nineteenth century, with the popular press instrumental in heightening the sense of a 'culture war' between conservatives and liberals over the nation's moral code. It was thus Christian lay figures such as the Anglican Mary Whitehouse rather than Christian leaders, who became the mouthpiece of moralism in this period.

Notable for their mainly middle-class membership, these moral campaigns, not surprisingly, became a vehicle for promoting middle-class values of self-restraint, respectability and self-reliance. They are therefore part of the much wider story of middle-class activism which exploded in the 1970s and whose political disillusionment Mrs

²⁷ SPUC was a non-denominational group founded in 1967.

²⁸ John Capon, ... *And There was Light. The Story of the Nationwide Festival of Light* (London, 1972).

²⁹ Whitehouse's campaign took much of its inspiration from the Moral Rearmament movement of the 1930s: David Morrison & Michael Tracey, *Whitehouse* (London, 1979)

Thatcher would later tap into.³⁰ Nor can the feminised character of these campaigns be overlooked.³¹ Whitehouse and Gillick both presented themselves as pious guardians of the sacred home; an image not-so dissimilar to Callum Brown's concept of a Christianised 'feminine piety' which prevailed in the pre-1960s era.³² This respectable and rather discreet middle-class maternal activism proved an alluring contrast to the aggressive working-class masculinity on show at the picket lines or the brash ostentatiousness and radicalism of the feminist movement in this period. And it was precisely this persona that Mrs Thatcher would come to make her own; that of the middle-class suburban housewife, armed with handbag and a practical knowledge of household economics, determined to kick the ruling elite into shape.

The moral lobby successfully fashioned itself as populist, anti-intellectual and anti-Establishment, while its style of activism was self-consciously amateur in both tone and delivery.³³ Like the New Right intelligentsia, the target for moral conservative groups was the secular liberal elite, who, they claimed, had ushered in the 'permissive' legislation against the will of the socially conservative majority.³⁴ As Victoria Gillick understood it, her battle was with the 'secular humanist philosophy' of the Establishment and her success at generating support led her to conclude that 'it was we, *the people*, who were now making all the running.'³⁵ The claim of a popular mandate by the moral lobby was dubious to say the least. Nonetheless, this juxtaposing of a liberal elite set against the popular will of the nation (also propagated by Enoch Powell on immigration) was a thread running throughout the discourse of the New Right and the traditionalist Anglican movement, and one Mrs Thatcher would excel in articulating to the electorate.³⁶

In the aftermath of the economic crisis of the mid-1970s, the moral lobby came to increasingly link the nation's moral decay with its financial decline. Monetary inflation and economic mismanagement seemed to have their parallels in delinquent behaviour and

³⁰ Roger King & Neill Nugent (eds.), *Respectable Rebels*.

³¹ See also Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy* on the construction of a feminised Toryism under Mrs Thatcher: ch.2.

³² Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*.

³³ An image which Mary Whitehouse was particularly successful in cultivating. Conservative Keith Joseph, for example, described her as an 'unknown middle-aged woman, a schoolteacher in the Midlands' who had 'set out to protect adolescents against the permissiveness of our time': Keith Joseph, ('Our Human Stock is threatened'), Edgbaston, 19 October 1974, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=101830> (date accessed 19/9/08). Victoria Gillick also presented herself in similar terms, explaining that her campaign was 'an idea, hatched up in a kitchen, put together on a rickety table and carried to the four corners of the Kingdom': Victoria Gillick, *Dear Mrs Gillick* (Basingstoke, 1985), p.73.

³⁴ A point also made by John Gummer in *The Permissive Society: Fact or Fantasy?*

³⁵ Gillick, *Dear Mrs Gillick*, p.8.

³⁶ See for example Mrs Thatcher, 'My Kind of Tory Party', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 January 1975 in Robin Harris (ed.), *The Collected Speeches of Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1997), pp.16-9.

excessive debauchery, which could only be resolved by financial and moral restraint. As Mrs Whitehouse insisted in a letter to Mrs Thatcher in June 1978, 'the will to beat inflation' was 'dependent upon the character of the people' which was 'moulded in the home'.³⁷ In the 1960s, consumerism and materialism had been viewed as much as a threat as collectivism by the moral lobby, and yet, by the end of the 1970s a belief that collectivism, 'permissiveness' and national decline were all inter-linked, became the prevailing view within the moral conservative movement and indicated the ever-closer alliance between the moral lobby and the Conservative party.³⁸

Although they may have welcomed the Conservative victory in 1979, Britain's moral crusaders were to experience a somewhat frustrated relationship with the government over the course of the next decade. As Martin Durham and more recently, Andrew Holden have shown, for all Mrs Thatcher's public protestations about moral rectitude and family values, this rhetoric rarely translated into law. Her government did little to reverse the legislation of the 1960s and, in some cases, such as divorce, liberalised the regulations even further.³⁹ Far from undertaking a 'moralist offensive' on 'permissive' Britain, Mrs Thatcher granted few concessions to the moral lobby.⁴⁰ More often than not, the initiative came from backbenchers, as in the case of abortion reform, with the Prime Minister sometimes refusing to give these bills the necessary parliamentary time. According to Victoria Gillick, who fought an unsuccessful battle with the government over the issuing of contraception to under-age girls, the Conservative party's discourse on family values was nothing more than 'electioneering humbug!'⁴¹ Nor did these moral groups receive much support from those within the New Right. Economic liberals tended to air on the side of personal freedom, while many New Right intellectuals found their puritanical moralising slightly distasteful.⁴² Anglican traditionalists on the other hand, were not only greatly in sympathy, but made up the majority of their members.

³⁷ Churchill College Archives, Margaret Thatcher Archive, 2/2/1/36, Letter from Mary Whitehouse, Valerie Riches, S. Cotson, Peter Dawson, and Ann Whitaker, 26 June 1978.

³⁸ Andrew Holden has shown how the link between the moral lobby and the parties was not always as clear cut, especially in the 1960s, where moral campaigners found ample support amongst Nonconformist Labour members as well as Conservatives: *Makers and Manners*, chs.4-6.

³⁹ Holden, *Makers and Manners*; Durham, *Sex and Politics*.

⁴⁰ Durham, *Sex and Politics*, conclusion.

⁴¹ Quoted in Andrew Holden, *Makers and Manners*, p.226, from Victoria Gillick, *A Mother's Tale*, (London, 1989), p.210.

⁴² See 'In God's Name do we Moralise too much?' *Daily Telegraph*, 22 December 1986, in Moore & Heffer (eds.), *A Tory Seer*, p.178-9.

Their support base in the parishes reflected the fact that a Christian motivation was at the root of the moral conservative movement.⁴³ The original manifesto of the NVLA, for example, had begun with the declaration: 'We women of Britain believe in a Christian way of life' and had listed those institutions in society, notably the BBC, which were threatening the religious and moral fibre of the nation. The FoL, on the other hand, engaged in old-style missionary activity, with the aim of winning over converts to the united causes of moral purity and faith in Christ. The Christian orientation of the moral movement is perhaps an obvious observation. Of more significance however, was the sense of frustration concerning the Church hierarchy's silence on these issues. There was a perception that religious leaders, especially the Anglican bishops, had embraced the moral relativism of the 1960s and were shying away from proclaiming Biblical notions of godly conduct. Those within the moral lobby, therefore, saw themselves as occupying a space in the public domain that the Church had vacated; by campaigning for legislative change on obscenity and sexual regulation and proclaiming moral certainties which their spiritual leaders seemed reluctant to declare. Whitehouse and others not only objected to the Church's supposed lack of leadership on these issues, but also its unwillingness to publicly endorse their campaigns, which tended to receive a much more favourable reception in Parliament than in the Synod.⁴⁴

Historians of this movement have potentially downplayed the extent to which these campaigns were as much a reaction against the Church's apparent support of the 'new morality' as it was against the 'new morality' itself.⁴⁵ Mary Whitehouse, therefore, frequently accused the Church of England leaders of having more in common with left-wing humanists than active Anglicans. During her Blasphemy trial against *Gay News* in 1977 for example, Whitehouse was concerned by the lack of support from the one institution she assumed she could rely upon: 'I came under enormous attack from just everybody – dons, religious leaders, the media people. I was completely overwhelmed by the extent of the opposition, and the silence of the Church.'⁴⁶ The muteness of the Church leaders on such matters contrasted with their outspokenness on political issues, a point Whitehouse made ten years later in a speech in Liverpool in which she challenged the city's religious leaders,

⁴³ Mary Whitehouse was an Anglican, Victoria Gillick was a Catholic, while the Festival of Light's leadership came from all Christian denominations.

⁴⁴ In 1985, the BSR, had issued a statement after Gillick had finally lost her case, which praised all her efforts, yet it was hardly a ringing endorsement of her cause: LPL, BSRP, SPC, Minutes 1985, Press statement 'Gillick case: "close monitoring" urges Church Board', 22 October 1985.

⁴⁵ Admittedly Holden does allude to the sense of dissatisfaction against the Church leadership within the moral movement in the 1960s, but he does not explore how this escalated in the 1980s: Holden, *Makers and Manners*, pp.210-13.

⁴⁶ Michael Tracey & David Morrison, *Whitehouse* (Basingstoke, 1979), p.13.

David Sheppard and Derek Worlock, to condemn moral depravity with the same earnestness that they spoke out against social deprivation.⁴⁷ The Director of the FoL was equally dismayed by the lack of support his organisation received from the Church: 'it was the silence that worried us so much. The Church leaders right down to parish level seemed ignorant of or unwilling to face the facts of moral decay. Although they were the people who had the tools for identifying and combating it.'⁴⁸ These grassroots Christian campaigns had in part grown out of their Church's adoption of a more liberal line, and were thus a reflection of the underlying schism between reformists and traditionalists within Christianity. Although the moral lobby were highly critical of the churches, they directed their energy and campaigns towards Parliament, an indication of where they felt the real influence lied and to an extent, an acknowledgement of the increasing secular nature of British society.

Economic Liberals

The intellectual debt that Thatcherism owed to philosopher Frederick Hayek and economist Milton Friedman was widely recognised at the time and has been by historians since.⁴⁹ The influence of economists and thinkers much closer to home has also been acknowledged. Important in this respect was the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), led by Lord Harris of High Cross, which had been advocating economic liberalism since the 1950s and in the mid-1970s finally found its ideas being listened to by the Conservative leadership. Closely connected to the IEA was the Social Affairs Unit (SAU), established in 1980, and headed by Anglican clergyman Rev. Digby Anderson, which produced a series of pamphlets applying free market principles to social issues such as poverty, social security and education. Another think-tank, one directly aligned to the Conservative party, was the Centre for Policy Studies, which was established in 1974 by Conservative MP Keith Joseph and political analyst Alfred Sherman with the explicit purpose of converting the party to economic liberalism.

Proponents of the market economy rooted their arguments in the sovereignty of liberty, which they proposed should determine a policy of minimal government interventionism in both the public and private realm. Central to this, was a belief that greater capital would eventually 'trickle-down' to the poor, which was deemed to be a more effective method of ensuring a reduction in poverty than a re-distributive state. Ideologically

⁴⁷ *Liverpool Daily Post*, 23 May 1987.

⁴⁸ Interview with Mr O.R. Johnstone, quoted in Cliff, 'Religion, Morality and the Middle Class' in King & Nugent (eds.), *Respectable Rebels*, p.131. See also Holden, *Makers and Manners*, pp. 211-13.

⁴⁹ Vinen *Thatcher's Britain*, ch.3.

opposed to centralised government, economic liberals argued that rather than bringing about greater stability and fairness, the state merely slowed down the mechanism of wealth creation. The neutral market, in contrast, enabled citizens to exercise their self-interest while at the same time contributing to the common good. According to economic liberals, the Keynesian approach to economic management had strangled the British economy, created a cumbersome and ineffective state, an over-powerful and disruptive trade union movement, and most disastrously of all, had fostered a dependency culture which had rid the British people of their industrial and entrepreneurial spirit. In their view, the priority of successive governments of maintaining mass employment had resulted in excessive levels of public expenditure and given rise to uncontrollable levels of inflation. Economic liberals proposed that curbing inflation by controlling the government money supply was essential, even if this resulted in widespread unemployment. The broader aim, economic liberals argued, should be to re-inject the principle of freedom back into Britain's economy, the state and its people. Not that there was uniformity about the precise implications of this philosophy; many disputed the responsibilities and size of the state and the degree to which the market should be regulated. Nonetheless, even if they differed on the details, there was an agreement on the fundamental causes and its remedy.

Historians and commentators have long disputed the extent to which Mrs Thatcher implemented these ideas and it is not the place to answer this question here. Nevertheless, it can be said that even though political expediency may have prevented Mrs Thatcher from enacting the more extreme aspects of this doctrine, there is little doubt that her administration signalled a sea change in attitudes towards the governance of the economy and that Thatcherism was more or less defined by its adherence to the doctrines of economic liberalism.

Advocates of the market economy did not simply argue from a rational basis of effectiveness and efficiency, but frequently made claim to its moral, and often Christian credentials. As has been already alluded to, the Christian churches since the late nineteenth century had adopted an increasingly critical view of the virtues of industrialisation and, to an extent, had successfully undermined the perception that capitalist and Protestant values were naturally entwined. During the 1970s, economic liberals, armed with a renewed confidence that they alone had the solutions to Britain's woes, engaged in an intellectual pursuit to counter this moral denigration of capitalism by asserting its Christian basis.⁵⁰ Drawing on its

⁵⁰ Friedman and Hayek did not avow to a religious understanding, however, Hayek did believe that the modern trend towards socialism was a denial of the key characteristics of Western civilisation which had its roots in Christianity.

nineteenth century precedents and building on the work of Hayek's critique of socialism and Milton Friedman's concept of individual freedom, the aim of this endeavour was twofold. Firstly, to refute the then widespread assumption of the moral superiority of egalitarianism and socialism, and secondly, to assert the Christian basis of the market economy.⁵¹

This is not to say that all economic liberals were Christian, but rather to argue that there were important individuals whose writings on Christianity and capitalism directly shaped Thatcherism and subsequently the Conservative party's response to the Church. Brian Griffiths, an Anglican, who had held a post at City University, London and was an academic advisor to the Bank of England, was a notable figure. His lectures on 'Morality and the Marketplace' delivered in 1980 had caught the attention of Mrs Thatcher, who made him her special advisor and eventually head of her policy unit.⁵² Also important was Lord Harris of High Cross at the IEA, who described himself as a 'stumbling member' of the Church of England. Harris believed in the Biblical heritage of economy liberty and was particularly critical of what he considered to be the Church's naïve endorsement of a Christianised state.⁵³ Both Griffiths and Harris entered into direct dialogue with the Church of England and regularly attended meetings at the BSR.⁵⁴

On what Scriptural and theological basis did Christian economic liberals justify the market economy? The Revelation, they judged, operated on a concept of individual liberty, for God had bestowed on man free will to choose the path of righteousness or damnation. They considered that as man's relationship with God was defined by liberty, so this principle should also condition man's relationship with the state. Central to this theological outlook was an emphasis on the doctrine of original sin, which was positioned in contrast to the secular socialist utopian view of man and the state. Lord Harris, for example, linked public choice theory with the inherent sinfulness of man in an effort to debunk the socialist myth of the exalted state. In Harris' view, an all-encompassing state did not further the common good but was mainly for the benefit of the post-Lapsarian bureaucratic class running it.⁵⁵ The collectivist and benevolent state was therefore dismissed as a heretical fantasy as it assumed

⁵¹ Similar developments were also taking place across the Atlantic, see for example, Ronald Nash, *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (London, 1990).

⁵² Raised as a Baptist in Wales, Griffiths, subsequently converted to Anglicanism. His key works include: Brian Griffiths, *Morality and the Market Place Christian Alternatives to Capitalism and Socialism* (London, 1982); *Monetarism and Morality* (London, 1985); *The Creation of Wealth* (London, 1984); 'Christianity and Capitalism' in *The Kindness that Kills*, pp.105-115.

⁵³ Ralph Harris, 'The Folly of Politicised Welfare' in *The Kindness that Kills*, p.92.

⁵⁴ LPL, BSRP, IEAC, Lord Harris, 'Can a Christian Legitimately Support a Social Market Economy', 1986. It should be noted here that Griffiths was an advocate of the social market economy and believed that the state did have a role to play in regulating the market and providing welfare.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

the inherent goodness of humanity and promised the recreation of God's Kingdom on earth. Lord Harris and others did not shy away from informing the Church that its faith in collectivist solutions was misplaced for it incorrectly located sin within institutional and societal structures rather than in the individual. As one commentator writing in a SAU pamphlet pointed out: 'The Churches would be on firmer ground if they stopped assuming that social evils can always be cured by intervention and that politicians somehow escaped the fall or have recovered the perfection of Eden.'⁵⁶ Behind these rather polemical words was a genuine belief that both politicians and churchmen needed to recognise the fallibility of the state and refocus their attention towards fallen man.

For Christian economic liberals, whereas the state prevented man from carrying out his God-given liberty, the market on the other hand, because it operated as a neutral space (what Adam Smith famously called the 'invisible hand'), enabled man to exercise his moral free will. According to Lord Harris, the market was the most effective and natural system to operate in a fallen world because it worked with, rather than against, sinful man and thus enabled him to choose his own lifestyle, for good or ill.⁵⁷ Where the Church had a role, Harris believed, was in nurturing and persuading man to execute his will for godly purposes.⁵⁸ According to economic liberals, freedom rather than equality was correct fulfilment of Biblical doctrine. Many also discounted the notion of a Scriptural basis for social justice arguing that although the Bible explicitly referred to man's charitable duty, there was no clear scriptural endorsement for equality. The Church hierarchy's anointment of such values, they concluded, derived not from Scriptural evidence, but class-consciousness, more specifically middle-class guilt rather than Christian altruism or faith.⁵⁹

Christian economic liberals were more likely to be from the evangelical rather than the high-anglican tradition and showed only a mild interest in internal Anglican affairs such as the ordination of women or the 'unbelieving bishop' incident. They were however, deeply involved in the political dialogue between liberal Anglicanism and the New Right. In 1984, the Rev. Digby Anderson and Lord Harris edited a collection of essays entitled *The Kindness that Kills*. The aim of the book was to unpick the ideological and political roots of Anglican social commentary which it denounced as an ungodly mixture of sociological ideas and naïve

⁵⁶ Robert Miller, 'Unemployment: Putting Faith in the New Princes' in *The Kindness that Kills*, p.80.

⁵⁷ It was on the issue of personal freedom where economic liberals came into conflict with the moral lobby. As Lord Harris elucidated: 'Much as I rejoice in the variety of God's creation, I deplore some of the tastes exhibited by others – and occasionally by myself. But I deplore even more strongly the relapse of good men and women who seek to impose their will on others by coercion – or outright violence.': Harris, 'Can a Christian', p.6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁵⁹ Paul Bauer, 'Ecclesiastical Economics of the Third World: Envy Legitimised' in *The Kindness that Kills*, pp.31-38.

paternalistic compassion. In a direct appeal to the laity, the authors warned against being taken in by the message emanating from the pens and lips of their spiritual leaders, for more often than not these were:

Sloppy, ill-thought out, ignorant, one-sided, addicted to secular fashions, uncritical of conventional 'progressive' wisdom, hysterical, unmethodical in the use of sources and evidence, theologically desiccated and, most deplorable, uncharitable to those who disagree.⁶⁰

These were harsh words, although sentiments which many in our next group would have agreed with.

Traditional Anglicans

Just as the 1970s saw a 'conservative turn' in the political, moral and economic spheres, so a parallel development took place within religion. As has already been set out in chapter II, the division between conservative and liberal Anglicans dated back to the religious crisis of the 1960s and in many ways supplanted existing factions. This break, therefore, added another layer of friction over existing tensions, with anglo-catholic traditionalists fearing that liberal reformism was destroying tradition and evangelical conservatives anxious that it was at the expense of Scriptural authority and the proselytising mission. The dualism between traditionalists and modernisers could be felt in all areas of ecclesiastical policy from liturgy to politics and a tension that reverberated across the Anglican Communion.⁶¹ Within England, the 1980s saw the formation of groups such as the evangelical 'Action for Biblical Witness to our Nation' and the anglo-catholic, 'Anglican Campaign' both of which were manifestations of the prevailing dissatisfaction with the ecclesiastical leadership and the direction of the Church.⁶² The large number of publications pertaining to a crisis within Anglicanism penned by traditionalists – critiques which often interlinked its theological, moral and political

⁶⁰ Digby Anderson & Ralph Harris, 'Introduction: Under False Colours' in *The Kindness that Kills*, p.2.

⁶¹ In 1988, for example, the traditionalist Anglo-Catholic Bishop of London agreed (reportedly without the permission of Runcie) to act as the bishop for a congregation in Tulsa, America, which had been expelled by the American Episcopal Church for its traditionalist practices: John S. Peart-Binns, *Graham Leonard, Bishop of London* (London, 1988), ch.13.

⁶² The basis of the Action for Biblical Witness to our Nation was entirely born out of the various crises and concerns in the 1980s. It urged the Church to appoint clergy who believed in the Creed, were willing to proclaim Biblical teachings on homosexuality and adultery, and uphold Christ as the only way to salvation in its discussion with other faiths. The 'Anglican Campaign' stated aim was to 'maintain the true religion and virtue of the Church of England'.

direction – are also testimony to the widespread disillusionment felt by traditionalist Anglicans in this period.⁶³

This division loosely paralleled left/right political boundaries, so whilst reformists tended to be on the side of progressive politics, traditionalists shared a political outlook with those on the right. Traditionalist Anglicanism proved to be in harmony with the broad ethos of the New Right in respect to its aversion to liberalism, its distrust of an elite liberal hierarchy, its claims to a populist (lay) mandate, its strict and conservative views on personal morality and its appeals to tradition and authority. Therefore, one of the reasons why the Anglican traditionalist cause managed to achieve the prominence that it did in the eighties was that it had sympathetic and influential allies in both the press and Parliament, not just the pulpit.⁶⁴

The spilt between traditionalist and reformist Anglicanism reached its apogee over the female ordination issue. While liberals believed it was a natural and just extension of God's priesthood, traditionalists (disproportionately anglo-catholics) contended that it demonstrated the Church prioritising secular notions of gender equality over Scriptural authority. Anglo-catholics were also particularly concerned that the issue threatened the Church of England's membership to the Universal Catholic Church. Diocesan and General Synod meetings were consumed with this issue and when in 1992 the Measure finally passed, it triggered an irrevocable breach with anglo-catholics leaving the Church of England.⁶⁵ This aside, the 1980s witnessed two specific episodes, outlined below, which give a crucial insight into the highly fractious state of the Church during this period.

Traditionalist fears concerning the infiltration of a radical liberal theology within the Church seemed confirmed in 1984 when the Bishop-elect David Jenkins denied the historical validity of the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and the miracles of Jesus during an interview on TV. Unlike John Robinson, whose theological views had caused a similar outrage twenty years before, Jenkins had not explained his position in a 200-page book, but

⁶³ Peter Moore (ed.), *The Synod of Westminster: Do We Need it?* (London, 1986); William Oddie, *After the Deluge: Essays towards the Desecularisation of the Church* (London, 1987); Charles Moore, A.N. Wilson & Gavin Stamp, *The Church in Crisis* (London, 1986); David Holloway, *A Nation Under God* (London, 1987).

⁶⁴ There were also important networks and personal links within the New Right. Prominent evangelical Rachel Tingle, for example, was married to the head of the right-wing Freedom Association, Philip Vander Elst. She also wrote for the *Salisbury Review* and authored a pamphlet on the teaching of homosexuality in schools: *Gay Lessons: How Public Funds are used to promote Homosexuality among Children and Young People* (London, 1986).

⁶⁵ The acceptance of women deacons (passed in 1986) paved the way for the ordination of female priests. Runcie's lack of resolution on the ordination issue however meant that the debate was more protracted and damaging than was perhaps necessary. The ordination of women issue is dealt with in the epilogue of this thesis.

on TV, where the full complexity of his outlook had been shredded on the editing table.⁶⁶ Moreover, Jenkins was about to be elevated to one of the most senior posts in the Church of England, the ceremony for which would involve swearing an oath to uphold the principles of the Anglican faith. Days after the TV broadcast York Minster was struck by lightning, turning the episode into a complete farce, with the press deeming it as God exhibiting his wrath on Jenkins.⁶⁷

A public outcry followed, with traditional Anglicans from both the evangelical and high-anglican wings of the Church calling for the 'unbelieving bishop' to be deselected.⁶⁸ In their view, the Jenkins' episode revealed the extent to which liberal doctrine had permeated the Church, for even senior prelates, heirs of the Apostolic Succession, were now denying the essentials of Christian belief and promoting views which were 'indistinguishable from Jehovah's Witness and even Hindu belief'.⁶⁹ Much of the reaction to Jenkins' comments was hot air, yet there was a genuine concern, as one group of theologians explained in a letter to the Archbishop of York, that this 'novel and speculative theology' had been uttered by a leading primate on television in front of millions which would result in much confusion and upset amongst the laity and the non-churchgoing mass.⁷⁰ Perhaps sensing this, diocesan bishops took great care to clarify Jenkins' precise meaning to their parishioners.⁷¹ Meanwhile the House of Bishops hastily ushered out a public declaration affirming their belief in the historical reality of the Resurrection, the Virgin Birth and the miracles of Jesus.⁷² For many traditionalist Anglicans, however, the damage had already been done.

Three years later, in 1987, the Church would experience one of the bleakest episodes in its modern history, one, which would further illustrate, in a deeply tragic and rather public way, the tensions within Anglicanism. It had been an established custom that the biennial *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, a reference book listing Anglican clergy, would feature an anonymous preface by an ordained priest. For the 1987 edition, the task fell to Oxford theologian and prominent member of the traditional anglo-catholic faction, the Rev. Gareth

⁶⁶ The 'Honest to God' debate is outlined in McLeod, *Religious Crisis*, pp.84-87.

⁶⁷ Ted Harrison, *The Durham Phenomenon* (London, 1985); Longford, *The Bishops*.

⁶⁸ See for example, *Daily Mail*, 25 June 1984; David Holloway, *The Church of England; Where is it going?* (Eastbourne, 1985); Jenkins, *The Calling of the Cuckoo*, chs.4-5.

⁶⁹ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1984*, Vol.15 No.2, 7 July 1984, p.425.

⁷⁰ Churchill College Archives, Enoch Powell Archive, 3/2/1/60, Other Political subjects and Msc. Files, Appointment of Bishops correspondence 84-86, 'An open letter to Dr Habgood about the Jenkins Affair', 11 July 1984. The Archbishop of York did not think it necessary for Jenkins to offer a public apology for his remarks: 'Dr Habgood's Reply to Durham Petition', *Church Times*, 6 July 1984.

⁷¹ See *Winchester Churchman*, No.260, November 1984, pp.4-6; YUL, BI, PC 62.12.YOR, York Diocesan Leaflet, September 1984, p.1.

⁷² *Statement of Belief* (London, 1984).

Bennett.⁷³ His preface, which was published unedited, amounted to a candid and damning attack on the leadership of the Church of England. Bennett directed his anger towards the 'liberal mafia' leading the Church, which, in his mind, were deliberately marginalising evangelical conservatives and anglo-catholic traditionalists and thereby endangering the comprehensiveness of Anglicanism. The Church of England, Bennett contended, was in a crisis of identity, for the unitary features which had kept the disparate factions together; the Church-state relationship; the Book of Common Prayer; its ministry; and finally, its conservative theological tradition, were gradually being eroded. Bennett laid much of the blame for this situation on the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom he described as one predisposed 'to put off all questions until someone else makes a decision for him'.⁷⁴ The vituperative tone of the piece inevitably meant that the preface would not go unnoticed and it was quickly picked up by the national press, while journalists engaged in a witch-hunt to uncover the identity of the anonymous author. Fearful that his name was about to be revealed, Bennett committed suicide at his home in Oxford.

The Conservative Party

If these groups – the New Right intellectuals, moral lobby, economic liberals and Anglican traditionalists – together constituted the 'right turn' in British public life in the 1970s, then it was the Conservative party led by Mrs Thatcher, which would ensure that there would be no turning back. In the aftermath of two election defeats in 1974, the Conservative party, engineered by Keith Joseph, underwent a 'conversion experience', rejecting the consensus politics of the past and embracing the principles of economic liberalism and social conservatism. In Joseph's mind, the ideological foundations of Conservatism had been compromised during the postwar years, for the 'middle ground' that the party had then occupied, 'had not been a secure basis but a slippery slope to socialism'.⁷⁵ Joseph's words on the perversion of Conservatism paralleled Edward Norman's thesis on the corruption of Anglicanism; both Church and party, it was believed, had been steered down the wrong course which had fundamentally undermined their integrity.

Thatcherism would draw upon the central threads of New Right thinking, including its populism, its anti-elitism, a critical view of liberalism and the state, its disdain for moral

⁷³ *Crockford's Clerical Directory 1987/8* (Oxford, 1987), pp.59-76; William Oddie, *Crockford's File: Gareth Bennett and the Death of the Anglican Mind* (London, 1989); Humphrey Carpenter, *Robert Runcie: The Reluctant Archbishop* (London, 1996), ch.17.

⁷⁴ *Crockford's Clerical Directory 1987/8*, p.68.

⁷⁵ Keith Joseph, 'The Quest for Common Ground' reprinted in Keith Joseph, *Stranded on the Middle Ground: Reflections on Circumstances and Policies* (London, 1976), p.20; see also Denham & Garnett, *Keith Joseph*.

‘permissiveness’ and its belief in individual responsibility.⁷⁶ Significantly, as we shall see, the Conservative party also shared the New Right’s Christian outlook. In ethos, and in some cases specifics, the Conservative party led by Mrs Thatcher, sided with the traditionalist wing of the Church; refuting not only the leadership’s progressive political outlook, but also the central tenets of liberal Anglicanism including its approach to liturgy, governance and personal morality.

Enoch Powell, who is often credited with paving the way for Mrs Thatcher, is worth reflecting upon here as someone who combined these two threads of religious and political conservatism.⁷⁷ A devout Anglican from the evangelical wing of the Church, Powell was a recognised Testament scholar who spent his dying days working on a revised translation of St John’s Gospel.⁷⁸ His views on race immediately put him at odds with the Anglican leadership, but this was not the only issue on which Powell positioned himself against the liberal Anglican consensus. A fierce defendant of the 1662 Prayer Book, he considered female ordination a ‘blasphemous pantomime’, had an unflinching (and somewhat anachronistic) belief in the supremacy of Parliament over the Church and was deeply hostile to any ecumenical alliances with Rome.⁷⁹ Powell also took a sceptical view of social Christianity. In 1969 in a televised debate with Bishop Trevor Huddleston, Powell asserted that their divergent views on race stemmed from ‘opposing secular observations’ rather than differing religious beliefs, telling Huddleston that his faith was merely an after-thought in this process: ‘when you are gratified with the conclusions that you arrive at, you dignify them as the consequence of Christian belief.’⁸⁰

Powell may have stated that his faith was separate from his politics, yet there is no doubt that his political conservatism complemented his religious conservatism in tone, if not in content. Like Lord Harris, Powell’s distrust of utopian visions of the state (and thus large-scale investment in it) was rooted in a doctrinal appreciation of man’s imperfect nature, while his political faith in liberty stemmed from an understanding of individual free will as the

⁷⁶ Hall (ed.), *The Politics of Thatcherism*; Shirley Letwin, on the other hand, described it as a ‘libertarian project bent on destroying the ‘liberal consensus’: *Anatomy of Thatcherism*, p.23.

⁷⁷ Here Powell is classified as a Conservative in this analysis. Even though Powell became an Ulster Unionist MP in 1974, philosophically and religiously he remained tied to his Conservative and English roots.

⁷⁸ For a study of Powell’s religious views, see Enoch Powell papers, Churchill College Cambridge; Enoch Powell, *No Easy Answers* (London, 1973); *Wrestling with the Angel* (London, 1977); Simon Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London, 1998), pp.134-8.

⁷⁹ Powell changed his place of worship from St Peter’s, Eaton Square because of its adoption of Romanish practises and moved to St Margaret’s, Westminster where the 1662 version of the Prayer Book was used: CCA, POLL 1/1/30A, File 1, fols.63-5.

⁸⁰ Televised broadcast debate on the social gospel with Rev. Trevor Huddleston in 1969, transcript reprinted in Rex Collings (ed.), *Reflections of a Statesman: the Writings and Speeches of Enoch Powell* (London, 1992), p.55; See also Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, ch.7.

essence of Christianity. Addressing a congregation in South London in 1973, for example, Powell tackled the subject of human progress and sin, affirming that the Bible did not contain a blueprint for human advancement or optimistic visions on the perfectibility of man on earth, for its message was quite the contrary; 'it uniformly teaches...that things will get worse rather than get better before we are through.'⁸¹ Powell's target was both social Christianity and socialism with his emphasis of the doctrine of the Fall assuming both sacred and secular significance. This emphasis on original sin by traditionalist Anglicans was no accident. Edward Norman has argued that this doctrine was the key difference that separated Christianity from secular humanism. The contemporary Church, however, had accommodated its teaching around this new secularised vision of man, amounting to a reformulation of sin which looked to structural forces rather than the individual. While Norman and Powell's assessments of social Christianity were highly subjective, it illustrates how contrasting emphases on individual and corporate sin became the main dividing line between the two factions within Christianity. There are obvious problems of attributing generalisations to Enoch Powell; for good or ill, he was independent and an exceptional figure. Yet there is surely significance in the fact that the man who laid the political foundations of Thatcherism, was not only motivated by a strong Christian commitment, but, from the 1960s, was articulating the theological differences between liberal Anglicanism and the New Right that would come to characterise the Church-state conflict in the 1980s.⁸²

Even by the late-1970s, it was clear that leading Conservatives had recalibrated their party's philosophy and more importantly, were drawing on the doctrine of original sin with which to do so. As Conservative party historian Stuart Ball has rightly pointed out, the notion of original sin had long been a feature of the party's ethos, acting as the basis for its moral position and its distrust of idealised socialist visions of human progress.⁸³ Conservative scholar Anthony Quinton, in his exploration of Conservative thought since the Reformation, has also judged that British Conservatism was predicated on a notion of 'imperfection' which fuelled its respect for the past and its scepticism towards the radical and the new.⁸⁴ This tradition became much more pronounced in the 1970s as the party's

⁸¹ CCA, POLL 1/4/33, *Wrestling with the Angel* files 2 of 2, Address to St Michael and Mary's, Southwark, 11 March 1973, p.4.

⁸² On the connections between Powellism and Thatcherism, see Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*, pp.53-58; Green, *Thatcher* chs.1,5; Vinen *Thatcher's Britain*, ch.2.

⁸³ Stuart Ball, *The Conservative Party and British Politics, 1902-1951* (Harlow, 1995), p.30.

⁸⁴ Anthony Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection: The Religious and Secular Traditions of Conservative Thought in England from Hooker to Oakeshott* (London, 1978). Quinton appreciates both the religious and secular foundations of Conservative thought and argues that the doctrine of original sin had secular as well as religious manifestations. In a different vein, Jonathan Parry has shown how a sinful view of the state was a key part of Gladstonian Liberalism: Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, p.167.

leadership sought new ways of addressing the crisis in social democracy and justifying the shift in emphasis from the state to the market. In a pamphlet written by Nigel Lawson in 1980 entitled *The New Conservatism*, the future Chancellor claimed that original sin was the key doctrine which separated the main political parties. Whereas socialism was deemed the ‘creed of utopianism and the perfectibility of man’, Conservatism concerned ‘the creed of original sin and the politics of imperfection’.⁸⁵ Lawson proposed that this belief in fallen man manifested itself politically in three ways: firstly it meant a distrust in the idea of human progress coupled with a regard for the past; secondly it engendered a scepticism towards man-made institutions, particularly the state; and thirdly, it encouraged a belief in gradual conservative change. Like Lord Harris, Lawson also drew on the concept of the Fall and public choice theory as a way of challenging the false notion of the state as a path to societal salvation: ‘We are all imperfect – even the most high minded civil servant...the civil servants and middle-class welfare professionals are far from the selfless Platonic guardians of paternalist mythology: they are a major interest group in their own right.’⁸⁶ All this was a clear exercise in political demarcation; the deployment of the notion of original sin in order to distinguish neo-Conservatism from socialism and the Tory party’s postwar mutations. This theological concept may have been divorced from its spiritual context and applied to rational political argument, but nonetheless, it had the effect of positioning neo-Conservatism alongside the party’s earlier more religious formations and lending a Christian fervor and dogmatic coherence to the neo-Conservative ideology. Mrs Thatcher, as we shall see in the proceeding chapter, would go on to enunciate these claims with even greater alacrity and within a more explicit theological framework.

Having set out the various components of the New Right and its connection to Christianity and to Thatcherism, this thesis will now go on to explore the ramifications of all of this for the relationship between the Conservative party and the Church in the 1980s.

II. The Conservative Party’s Critique of Anglicanism

It is judged that long before Mrs Thatcher came to power, Christianity had ceased to be a central component of Conservative party identity.⁸⁷ As the above analysis suggests, it was disillusionment rather than disinterest, which characterised the relationship between the right and the Church in the 1970s. The subsequent decade saw a *revival* rather than a

⁸⁵ Nigel Lawson, *The New Conservatism*, 4 August 1980, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=109505> (accessed 19/05/10).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See for example, Peter Catterall, ‘The Party and Religion’, pp.637-670.

retrenchment in ecclesiastical affairs amongst Conservative parliamentarians. From the mid-1970s, Parliament became one of the key locations for the traditionalist campaign against the liberal Church leadership, with Conservative Anglicans using the opportunity of the passing of Church Measures to offer their critical judgment on where the Church was going wrong.⁸⁸ The 1980s saw Parliament twice reject Measures (in 1984 and 1989), and, controversially, saw the introduction of a bill on liturgy, which, had it passed, would have been legally binding for parishes. The initiative did not come from the Conservative party leadership, nor was it a battle that much interested Labour or Alliance MPs, but involved an extremely well organised group of Christian Conservative MPs and peers.⁸⁹ It is difficult to put a precise figure on this parliamentary faction, at the very least it comprised of a core of about thirty MPs and, at most, it could amass about one hundred members in the Commons, over a third of the parliamentary party.⁹⁰ Although the principal opposition came from the Commons (which historically has always been less deferential to the ecclesiastical hierarchy) there was also an important cluster of support in the Lords including Lord Sudeley and cross-bencher Baroness Cox. Its members came from both the evangelical and the high-anglican wings of the Church and included MPs such as lay Synod member John Stokes, William Powell, Ivor Stanbrook, Harry Greenway and Enoch Powell, as well as those MPs who gained notoriety as ‘moral crusaders’ in this period such as Dame Jill Knight and Ann Winterton.

Establishment and the Rule of Parliament

The formation of the General Synod in 1970 had been heralded as a new dawn for ecclesiastical autonomy. When in 1974, church officials proposed a further extension of Synodical powers to give the chamber full responsibility over its liturgy it was assumed that Parliament would willingly grant these powers to the Church. When the Worship and Doctrine Measure reached the Commons however, it inspired a fierce reaction from Anglican Conservative MPs who perceived it to be a further nail in the coffin to the historic principle of Anglican establishment and signalling, in the words of one MP, ‘the denationalisation of the Church of England’.⁹¹ Conservative MPs considered that the

⁸⁸ Church Measures were first passed by the Synod, were then subject to scrutiny by the Ecclesiastical Committee and were subsequently presented to Parliament.

⁸⁹ Most Labour and Liberal MPs tended to greet Church Measures with a mild indifference. Two important exceptions were Anglicans Simon Hughes (Liberal) and Frank Field (Labour) who both took an eager interest in ecclesiastical affairs.

⁹⁰ A core list of those Anglican Conservative MPs and their voting record on various Church Measures is given in Appendix IX.

⁹¹ *Parl. Proc. HC Debs*, 4 December 1974, Vol.882, col.1603.

ecclesiastical desire for even greater autonomy was symptomatic of the Church's predilection for reform and its complete disregard for its historic relationship to Parliament. For Enoch Powell, a fully 'self-governed' Church fundamentally altered the foundations of established Anglicanism and ultimately resulted in the separation of the Church from the nation:

There are still to be considered those millions of men and women to whom it belongs – albeit occasionally – and there are still those in generations yet to come for whom the comprehensiveness of the Church of England will give a religious home, a home in the church, which otherwise they would not find. The only representatives of that Church of England are those who created the Church of England by establishing it by law, namely, this House.⁹²

That the Church's identity and authority derived from its relationship with Parliament was a concept that few clergy would have endorsed. As we have seen in Chapter II, the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the 1980s reconfigured the position of the established Church by rooting its legitimacy not in its links to temporal power, but in its role in civil society and in providing a spiritual focus for a nominally Christian nation. Anglican Conservatives articulated establishment in quite different terms, arguing that it centred on Parliament as the crucial mediator between the Church and the people. In seeking to dissolve this bond, Anglican Conservatives argued, the Church was in danger of cutting itself off from the populace and undermining one of the central tenets of the English constitution.

Arguably, both these conceptions of establishment religion were misconceived and were defensive responses to the broader secular trends in British society. In the Conservative case, it had been a long time since the Church had been fully subservient to Parliament, nor did the concept of the Commons as the guardian of popular religiosity bear any relation to how the majority of the public perceived Christianity and the Church. The purpose behind this argument, however, was to position Conservative Anglicans and the traditionalist cause on the side of history at a time when Anglicans were locked in a debate about the direction of their Church. Moreover, this appeal to the nation's constitutional history had an additional resonance for Conservatives for it harked back to a time when the Church and party had been in alliance, defenders and protectors of each other's interests. The Anglican Conservative reaction in fact concealed an altogether different fear: not that the Church was distancing itself from Parliament, but that it was distancing itself

⁹² Ibid., col.1676.

irrevocably from the Conservative party. As Conservative Anglican MP William Powell explained in a letter to a sympathetic Bishop of Peterborough in 1984, the supremacy of Parliament was necessary in order to save Anglicanism from ‘narrow paths’ and ‘unwanted reforms’. In his view, the Church needed to regain its spirit not through secular causes or ecumenicalism but in an ‘acceptance of the Royal Supremacy’.⁹³ Ostensibly, Powell was urging the Church to return to its traditional source of power, yet the implicit message here was that Anglican Conservatives in Parliament were saving the Church from liberal reformism and were redirecting it back to its Conservative roots.

As the Church’s doctrinal, moral and political position became more controversial and tensions between Church and government more fraught, Anglican Conservatives returned to this argument again and again, frequently situating Parliament against the Synod. Back in 1974, in the debate on the Worship and Doctrine Measure, Anglican Conservative John Stokes had observed that the Synod, in contrast to the Commons, was unaccountable and out of touch with its members.⁹⁴ Fifteen years later in 1989, Stokes made an even bolder claim. Reflecting upon his own recent experience as a member of the House of Laity, Stokes concluded that it was MPs at Westminster rather than representatives in the Synod who ‘more accurately’ expressed the concerns of the ordinary man in the pew.⁹⁵ The Synod became an easy target for all those frustrated with the direction of the Church. In a contribution to a book entitled *The Church in Crisis*, Charles Moore criticised the Synod for having all the worst characteristics of ‘modern secular politics’ with its obstructive procedures, bureaucratic structure and self-serving Synodical class. The existence of a separate chamber, he complained, completely undermined the historical concept that ‘the Church of England is the property of the English people (and therefore looked after them by their elected representatives).’⁹⁶ As Moore’s sentiments suggest, there was a tendency amongst some traditionalist Anglicans (inside and outside the House) to claim that the unchurched mass were on the traditionalist side of the divide and felt alienated and adrift from liberal Anglicanism. This was a highly contestable assumption. Much more accurate was the fact that parliamentary prerogative had assumed new relevance in an age when the church was divided. For, as John Gummer spelt out in 1990, the ecclesiastical responsibility

⁹³ CCA, POLL 3/2/1/60, Other Political Subjects and Msc. Files, Appointments of Bishops correspondence, 1984-6. Copy of Letter from William Powell to Bishop of Peterborough, 30 July 1984.

⁹⁴ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 4 December 1974, Vol.882, col.1590.

⁹⁵ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 17 July 1989, Vol.157, col.185.

⁹⁶ Moore, Wilson & Stamp, *The Church in Crisis*, p.43.

of Parliament was to stand up for those ‘who have been disfranchised by the mechanisms of the Church’.⁹⁷

Just as Conservatives did not particularly welcome the Church’s intervention in politics, so clerics were not particularly keen on MPs interfering in ecclesiastical matters. When in 1986 Conservative Anglicans demanded regular meetings with the bishops to discuss forthcoming Church Measures, the request was refused by the Bishop of Southwark. This prompted an angry response from Ivor Stanbrook MP who rebuked: ‘To you, who do not relish democratic argument, it appears we are a nuisance.’⁹⁸ Frank Field, who sat on the Ecclesiastical Committee, the body that scrutinised Church Measures before they were submitted to the House, put such tensions down to the dismissive attitude of the Anglican leadership, who expected Westminster to simply rubber-stamp Measures.⁹⁹ Field was no doubt right, but there is also evidence that the Anglican traditionalist faction in the Synod were actively in cahoots with Conservative MPs and were seeking to mobilise parliamentary opposition against the Church. In 1986 Lay Synod member Kathleen Griffiths wrote to Enoch Powell suggesting a meeting between ‘conservative Synod members’ and MPs in order to coordinate a ‘common policy’ to subvert the prevailing ‘ecclesiasticism’.¹⁰⁰ Even though it may never have been formalised, this was to prove an extremely effective alliance throughout the 1980s.

Liturgy and Theology

The first issue on which Anglican Conservatives in Westminster linked up with traditional Anglicans was the defence of the 1662 version of the Common Book of Prayer. From the early 1960s, the Church had produced three different updated versions of the liturgy, much to the dismay of some laity, yet it was the proposal of a further revision, entitled the Alternative Service Book, which led a group of Anglicans to establish the Prayer Book Society (PBS) in 1975. Dedicated to preserving the use of the 1662 Rite, which it deemed the ‘spiritual birthright of the nation’, the PBS had by the end of the 1970s established a strong support network in the parishes and recruited a considerable number of MPs and

⁹⁷ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 20 February 1990, Vol.167, col.891.

⁹⁸ CCA, POLL 3/2/3/2/A, File 1, Copy of letter from Ivor Stanbrook to the Bishop of Southwark, 4 May 1987.

⁹⁹ Frank Field, ‘The Church of England and Parliament: A Tense Partnership’ in George Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today*, pp.55-74. The Ecclesiastical Committee was an all-party joint group of both houses composed of thirty members. It could choose to recommend or reject Church Measures but was unable to amend them.

¹⁰⁰ CCA, POLL 3/2/3/2/B, Correspondence 1984-6, Letter from Kathleen Griffiths, 7 June 1986.

peers (mostly Conservative) to fight its cause.¹⁰¹ In a strategic attempt to put as much pressure on the Church hierarchy as possible, the PBS amassed an impressive collection of signatures from leading figures from Britain's military, academic, legal and literary spheres in a petition to protect the Prayer Book, which was eventually presented to the Synod.¹⁰²

Twenty-nine parliamentarians had signed the document, the majority of whom had been Conservatives, including three members of Mrs Thatcher's first cabinet.¹⁰³ Even before the petition idea had been mooted, Anglican Conservative MPs and peers were agreed that the PBS campaign should be raised within Parliament. In 1978, renegade Conservative peer Lord Sudeley, who could trace his ancestral roots back to one of the Knights who had murdered Thomas à Beckett, himself engaged in a similar act of defiance against spiritual authority by attempting to defend the 1662 version of the Prayer Book. The Prayer Book (Ballot of Laity) Bill, as it was known, aimed at allowing each parish to conduct a vote to decide which liturgical version they would prefer to be used.¹⁰⁴ Sudeley's bill was controversial, for it was the first time since the Enabling Act of 1919 that Church legislation had been initiated in Parliament. As such it was regarded as a dangerous precedent, with the then Bishop of London, Gerald Ellison, labelling it 'an attack upon the whole system of Church government.'¹⁰⁵ Despite support in the House, Sudeley agreed to withdraw the bill at the Second Reading stage. Three years later, in 1981, another distinguished aristocrat took up the cause, the newly elected Conservative MP and heir to the Salisbury title, Viscount Cranborne.¹⁰⁶ Fearing the potential constitutional ramifications, the government enforced the whip on this occasion, however Cranborne still succeeded in gaining 152 (to 130) majority in favour of the bill progressing. It was duly introduced as the Prayer Book Protection Bill in the Lords later that day, but on mutual agreement by both Houses, the bill was abandoned.¹⁰⁷ These attempts by Parliamentarians to curb liturgical reform were never likely to succeed, but, as the Archbishop of York later admitted, it had 'served as a

¹⁰¹ The subject was also addressed in *The Salisbury Review*: see David Martin, 'Where stands the Prayer Book Now', *The Salisbury Review*, Issue 3, (Spring 1983), pp.38-41; Enoch Powell, 'The Language of the Prayer Book', *The Salisbury Review*, Issue 6, (Winter 1984), pp.4-6. It should be noted here that the Prayer Book controversy was not simply a spilt between traditionalists and reformers, but a subject, which also aroused separate evangelical, Anglo-catholic and liberal responses.

¹⁰² *Poetry Review* 13, Vol.6, No.5, (1979), pp.51-62. It was also made known that the PBS campaign was supported by members of the Royal Family with Prince Charles eventually becoming its chairman.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 21 March 1978, Vol.389, cols.1725-85. Some Labour peers did support the bill, see for example, Lord Glenamara, *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 21 March 1978, Vol.389, cols.1770-3.

¹⁰⁵ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 21 March 1978, Vol.389, col.1736.

¹⁰⁶ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 8 April 1981, Vol.2, cols.959-64.

¹⁰⁷ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 8 April 1981, Vol.419, cols.612-67. Undeterred Lord Sudeley reintroduced the bill in 1984, this time calling for a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the use of the Prayer Book within the parishes. He agreed to withdraw it after Runcie's assurances that the Prayer Book would be protected: *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 11 April 1984, Vol.450, cols.1208-66.

protest' and proved much more effective than the petition to the Synod.¹⁰⁸ And to an extent, a certain victory had been won of sorts, for the combined campaign from Anglican parliamentarians and the PBS forced the Archbishop of Canterbury to give his personal assurances that the Book of Common Prayer would not be fazed out of the parishes or the Church's theological training colleges.¹⁰⁹

The defence of the Prayer Book had revealed much about the traditionalist cause and parliamentary Conservatism's place within it. The campaign had centred on an understanding that the 1662 Rite was a central part of the 'intellectual and emotional scaffolding' of the nation's religious heritage, in that it connected practising and non-practising Anglicans, and past and present generations.¹¹⁰ As the Earl of Halsbury explained, in a 'gimmicky' and 'uncomfortable' age, it was wrong for the Church to subject liturgy to such fleeting desires: 'there is something timeless about worship, where an actual contribution is made by feeling that you are doing exactly the same thing in exactly the same way as your longfathers of old.'¹¹¹ Yet the idea that the 1662 Rite was somehow 'timeless' was not strictly true, the 1928 Revised Prayer Book had been used widely in English parishes for the last fifty years.¹¹² There was far from uniformity between the parishes, let alone across successive generations within the Church of England.¹¹³ Nonetheless, this invention of tradition and this evocation of continuity with the past demonstrated a common thread between political and religious conservatism.

The campaign to protect the Prayer Book was deliberately fashioned as a defence of Englishness rather than as an Anglican or even a religious issue. This was done by emphasising its literary significance and as a central instrument of popular religiosity, part of the 'natural furniture of the mind' of the nation.¹¹⁴ As one PBS supporter lamented in 1979, in an age when 'This country has lost an Empire and has not found a role' it was an 'entirely inappropriate time to obliterate the Book of Common Prayer by endless nervous variations

¹⁰⁸ Habgood, *Church and Nation in a Secular Age*, p.128.

¹⁰⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 23 February 1984.

¹¹⁰ Enoch Powell, 'The Language of the Prayer Book', p.6

¹¹¹ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 21 March 1978, Vol.389, col.1765.

¹¹² The parallels with the 1928 Prayer Book controversy are particularly insightful here, for whereas in the interwar period the conflict between evangelicals and high-Anglicans had centred on the preservation of the nation's Protestant identity, fifty years later, debates on liturgical reform between reformists and traditionalists revolved around the preservation of the nation's Christian identity, pointing towards the possible impact of secularisation on debates about religious liturgy. For a history of the 1927/8 Prayer Book controversy, see John Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-8* (London, 2009).

¹¹³ Peter Cornwell, *Church and Nation* (Oxford, 1983), p.27.

¹¹⁴ David Martin, 'Why Spit on our Luck?' in *Poetry Review* 13, Vol.6, No.5, (1979), p.1.

and forfeit utterly any way of saying our public prayers in unison.¹¹⁵ Similar thoughts were echoed by traditionalist Anglican Rev. Peter Mullen, who, in a letter to Enoch Powell in 1984, spoke of the centrality of Englishness to his understanding of Anglicanism: ‘Our English Church....It’s that word “English” that counts, isn’t it? I offer no hostility to strangers within our gates, but England is what makes us what we are.’¹¹⁶ That Mullen had interlinked immigration, Englishness and Anglicanism in a letter to Enoch Powell is perhaps unsurprising, yet it also signals the way in which traditionalists linked fears about national and religious decline. Such references to decolonisation and immigration suggest that the campaign was as much a reflection of concerns about the dilution and weakening of Englishness than it was about religious liturgy.¹¹⁷

The next episode over which Anglican Conservatives demonstrated their wrath against the Church leadership was over the ‘unbelieving Bishop’ affair in 1984. In July, a few months after Jenkins’ notorious interview, MPs were given a forum to vent their frustrations in the debate on the Appointments of Bishops Measure. As the last piece of House business at the end of the day and with only forty-nine MPs in attendance, it was assumed that this minor piece of Church legislation on the election procedure for bishop appointees would quickly be granted parliamentary assent.¹¹⁸ The debate was sparsely attended (not one Labour MP was present), yet an important cluster of aggrieved Anglican Conservatives showed up determined to vocalise their concerns about the ‘agnostic’ Jenkins.¹¹⁹ At 12.21am the vote was taken and lost, with thirty-two voting against the Measure (seventeen voted for it). Although the numbers were small, the result was significant for it was the first time that Parliament had dismissed a Church Measure since the formation of the Synod in 1970.

Not content with this victory, aggrieved Anglican Conservatives wrote to the Prime Minister to lobby for increasing temporal influence on the Crown Appointments Commission, the body which selected the bishops.¹²⁰ The Jenkins’ saga, they believed, was a result of the Church having too much control over its ecclesiastical patronage, which had led to a series of radical appointments all moulded in the Anglican reformist tradition. All

¹¹⁵ Geoffrey Sheppard, ‘The Anglican Manifesto’, *Poetry Review* 13, Vol.6, No.5, (1979), p.10.

¹¹⁶ CCA, POLL 3/2/3/2/B, Correspondence 1984-6, Letter from Rev. Peter Mullen, 14 November 1984.

¹¹⁷ Enoch Powell’s criticisms always centred on the Church hierarchy and the imposition of its liberal values on an unwilling laity rather than an attack on religious minorities for diluting Britain’s Christian culture.

¹¹⁸ The Measure overruled a procedure dating back to 1533 in which a diocesan bishop had to be ceremoniously elected by the Great Chapter of the Cathedral.

¹¹⁹ *Parl. Debs.*, HC Debs, 16 July 1984, Vol.64, cols.126-44.

¹²⁰ A copy of the letter is held in the Enoch Powell archives, CCA, POLL 3/2/1/60, Other Political subjects and Msc. Files, Appointment of Bishops correspondence 1984-86.

the signs were that the Prime Minister did not wish to be drawn into any constitutional rifts over the separate powers of Church and Crown. Mrs Thatcher however was aware of the potential of 'bishop-bashing' for rousing the party faithful, as she demonstrated that autumn in her conference speech, in which she made derogatory remarks about Bishop Jenkins.

The defeat of the Appointments Measure received a mixed response from those within the Church. Canon Buchanan, speaking in the Synod, interpreted the vote as a 'declaration of war' from Parliament.¹²¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury, on the other hand, clearly thought it prudent to inject some spiritual diplomacy, immediately writing to Enoch Powell to ask for a meeting to discuss the matter.¹²² It is evident, however, that many traditional Anglicans welcomed this intervention, interpreting the defeat as a necessary flexing of Parliament's muscles against an arrogant Church leadership. One reader writing to *The Times* expressed his relief that the English Constitution 'possesses those abilities to check and restrain which are so irritating to modern prelates and ecclesiastical intellectuals.'¹²³ One lay Anglican wrote to Enoch Powell personally to thank him for his interception, judging it essential at a time when church leaders 'seem to compromise to get into secular matters and to give up its call to draw those things into the spirit of Christianity.'¹²⁴ Long-time lay Synod member, Gervase Duffield also penned a letter to Powell conveying his gratitude confirming that in his experience 'the ordinary run of church folk' were not represented in the church's assembly and concluded that 'if Parliament does not protect them no-one will from those awful ecclesiastical sectarians and their trendy ways.'¹²⁵ Such letters merely confirmed what Anglican Conservative MPs already knew: that they represented the views of a significant and dissatisfied section within the Church.

If Anglican Conservatives in Parliament were emerging as the defenders of the traditional cause then there is ample proof that this was recognised by some sympathetic churchgoers. Confident that her predicament would find sympathy with Enoch Powell, one female lay Anglican from Birmingham wrote to Powell to complain about her vicar's wayward practises, which allegedly included prayers for the women of Greenham Common, the celebration of Communion by the Vicar's wife and the use of the parish for a Muslim

¹²¹ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1985*, Vol.16, No.1, 14 February 1985, p.285

¹²² CCA, POLL 3/2/1/60, Other Political subjects and Msc. Files, Appointment of Bishops correspondence 1984-86, Letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, 25 February 1985.

¹²³ *The Times*, 3 August 1984.

¹²⁴ CCA, POLL 3/2/1/60, Other Political Subjects and Msc. Files, Appointments of Bishops Correspondence 1984-6, Letter from parishioner (name withheld), no date.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter from Gervase Duffield, 14 August 1984.

funeral.¹²⁶ In the previous chapter we saw how parishioners in Liverpool believed that their spiritual leaders were vocalising their political priorities, however, it is clear that other sections of the Christian laity considered that their political representatives, such as Enoch Powell, were protecting their religious concerns. Hence the 1980s saw an interesting paradox develop, for just as the Church justly claimed to speak on behalf of the socially deprived and those who felt neglected by the government, so Conservative Anglicans spoke on behalf of the spiritually deprived who felt detached from their Church and ignored by its leaders.

Morality

In 1989 Conservative Anglicans successfully defeated another Church Measure, a proposal to allow remarried or divorced men to be ordained. This had been a contentious issue before it had even reached the House, splitting both the Synod and the Ecclesiastical Committee.¹²⁷ When the Measure reached the House of Commons, it was defeated by 51 votes to 45. Seven months later, the Church reintroduced it (at a more respectable hour in the day hence the larger vote) when it passed by 228 votes to 106; but, according to John Gummer, only on the 'strength of votes from atheists and agnostics'.¹²⁸

The significance of the Clergy Ordination episode lies not in the fact that it was initially rejected but in how the debate raised the issue of the Church's position on morality. This would be a topic, which would inspire even greater interest from Conservative MPs than the rather narrow intricacies of ecclesiastics or liturgy. For many Anglican Conservatives the Measure smacked of hypocrisy for it directly contravened the Church's teaching on marriage as a life-long commitment. Anglican Conservative and moral campaigner Ann Winterton was less concerned about the ramifications for the priesthood than about what the Measure revealed about the Church's moral leadership. Winterton considered that the position of the Church was crucial 'at a time when the country is longing for a strong moral lead'. While Winterton admitted that MPs may be reluctant to

¹²⁶ CCA, POLL 3/2/3/2 B, Correspondence 1984-6, Letter from parishioner (name withheld), 21 July 1984.

¹²⁷ This Measure had not obtained the required two-thirds majority of each houses necessary for it to be accepted, however, the Law Lords judged that an overall majority of all houses would be acceptable. The matter of calculating majorities in the Synod was a hotly contested issue, especially with the anticipated decision on female ordination likely to be tight. In respect to this Measure, the Ecclesiastical Committee evoked the 1919 Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act which stipulated that when the Committee were unable to agree, it could ask for a conference with the legislative committee of the Synod. This was the first occasion that this provision had been invoked.

¹²⁸ John Gummer, 'Conserving the Family' in Alison & Edwards (eds.), *Christianity and Conservatism*, p.307.

‘take on the established Church and to give it a boot up the backside’, she urged them to challenge the ‘liberal trends on matters of morality’ and vote against a Measure which made a ‘mockery of the Church’s teaching’.¹²⁹

One of the chief characteristics of the moral lobby, as we have seen, was the way in which it castigated the Anglican hierarchy for its ‘soft’ line on morality and these frustrations were shared by Anglican Conservatives in Parliament. Historians Andrew Holden and Martin Durham have both shown how, during the Thatcher period, the moral impetus for legislative change in the Conservative party largely came from a core group of backbenchers. Yet, while their Christian motivation is often mentioned, the tendency has been to locate this movement within a political rather than a religious context. Those MPs and peers who so forcefully pursued moral causes in Westminster – on which the reputation of the Thatcher government as moral authoritarian largely rests – were not simply inspired by Christian faith, but more importantly, were aligned with the traditionalist wing of the Church.¹³⁰ We must be careful not to overstate this connection, for matters of conscience, as has historically always been the case, engaged members of all parties and faiths in Parliament in the 1980s.¹³¹ Yet there is a definite correlation between those Conservatives who supported Section 28, restrictions on abortion and pornography and those who took the traditionalist line and voted against Church Measures in this period.¹³² Leading members of the moral group within Parliament therefore, tended to be disaffected Anglican Conservatives who judged that both Parliament and Church were failing in their moral duty to oppose ‘social permissiveness’.¹³³ Pressure on the government for greater moral regulation was, therefore, couched in an explicitly Christian rather than moral discourse and was often coupled with an attack on the Church’s leadership.

Speaking in 1981, during the Indecent Displays Bill, Anglican Conservative Sir Peter Mills took the opportunity to reflect on what he considered to be the cause of society’s moral degradation:

I make no apology for saying that I believe that the permissive society
has gone too far.....I hope that it will not be taken amiss if I quote

¹²⁹ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 20 February 1990, Vol.167, cols.888-9.

¹³⁰ One exception to this was Enoch Powell who thought that politicians should stay out of personal moral issues: Holden, *Makers and Manners*, p.192.

¹³¹ It was the Catholic Liberal MP David Alton, for example, who led the various attempts to amend the 1967 Abortion Act.

¹³² See Appendix IX.

¹³³ Ann Winterton, Jill Knight, Harry Greenway and Ann Widdecome were also involved in the Conservative Family Campaign established in 1986 which aimed to establish a policy of the family rooted in Christian values: Durham, *Sex and Politics*, pp.155-9.

the Good Book – “Righteousness exalteth a nation.” We are dealing here with a question of righteousness. upon which all-else stands, there are God's laws. Chip away at the bottom and the whole thing starts to collapse – democracy and all that we stand for in this place and in our nation.’¹³⁴

As Sir Peter’s remarks suggest, Conservative Anglicans perceived that an ungodly ‘permissiveness’ had been unleashed when British law had become disconnected from its Christian roots, believing that the only way to re-establish this bond was to bring about a moral renaissance in society and law.¹³⁵ Anglican Conservatives deployed similar arguments in opposition to their government’s Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act, which aimed at reducing the waiting time for a divorce. Dame Jill Knight, for example, argued that the spiritual legitimacy bestowed on the state through the established Church meant that the government was duty-bound to ensure that divorce was discouraged.¹³⁶ Harry Greenway MP put it even more forcefully, declaring ‘this debate is about marriage and God’s interpretation of it, not about man’s legal interpretation of marriage, because it is a gift of God.’¹³⁷

Traditionalists tended, therefore, to conceptualise sexual ethics in terms of a purist/Christian versus a ‘permissive’/secular dualism, with the expectation that the Church should be taking the lead in reasserting Christian standards. According to Anglican Conservatives, the problem was that all too frequently Church leaders appeared to be on the ‘permissive/secular’ end of this spectrum.¹³⁸ This frustration was evident in the passage of the notorious Section 28 Clause of the 1988 Local Government Act outlawing the promotion of homosexuality in schools. The debate centred on the flagrancy of municipal socialism, parental rights and the protection of innocent children, and also fed into the prevailing anxieties about homosexuality in the wake of the AIDS epidemic.¹³⁹ Many Anglican Conservatives spoke of their support for the clause in respect to the maintenance of Biblical and Christian standards within society. Nicholas Bennett MP, for example, contended that the Scriptural teaching on homosexuality was unequivocal and that, as Britain

¹³⁴ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 30 January 1981, Vol.997, col.1199.

¹³⁵ Such sentiments were also expressed by those on the opposite sides of the house, but this often came in the form of a lament for a time passed rather than a genuine belief that it could be reinstated: see Ernest Armstrong MP, *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 30 January 1981, Vol.997, cols.1171-2.

¹³⁶ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 16 February 1984, Vol.54, cols.451-2.

¹³⁷ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 13 June 1984, Vol.61, col.991.

¹³⁸ A point made by conservative evangelical Rachel Tingle in *Another Gospel?*, p.13.

¹³⁹ Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the 19th century to the Present* (London, revised edition, 1990), ch.18; Simon Garfield, *The End of Innocence: Britain in the Time of AIDS* (London, 1994); Holden, *Makes and Manners*, pp.243-56; Durham, *Sex and Politics*, ch.6.

was a Christian country, the nation's schools had an obligation to teach about relationships in accordance with the 'Judaic-Christian principles which underlie our society'.¹⁴⁰

Given this Christian outlook, it was unsurprising that many Anglican Conservatives raised the issue of the Church's confusing stance on homosexuality during the Section 28 debate. The previous November, the Synod had passed a resolution affirming that sexual relationships should be conducted within marriage and that homosexuals should be called upon to repent.¹⁴¹ For some, however, the language of the resolution had not been emphatic enough; for while adultery in a heterosexual relationship had been classified as a 'sin', this wording had not been used in reference to homosexuality, which was merely deemed to fall short of the Christian 'ideal'. Many traditionalists were also disappointed that the statement had not explicitly ruled out homosexuality amongst the priesthood.¹⁴² The press duly mocked the resolution, taking it as the Church's enthusiastic endorsement of homosexuality (see fig.1). While in the parliamentary debate on Section 28 more than one Conservative pointed to the ambiguousness of the Church's position on homosexuality.¹⁴³ Baroness Blatch, for example, figured that the Church's abstruse statement demonstrated a failing lack of certainty, as she rather pithily stated: 'I am not entirely sure that the Church of England is unanimous in its opposition to sin. Nor am I entirely sure that it is unanimous in its definition of sin.'¹⁴⁴ The Church's confusion on this matter was confirmed when the prelates entered the division lobby, for four bishops voted against its inclusion and two supported the clause.¹⁴⁵ In the debate, the Archbishop of York had explained that his opposition to section 28 concerned civil liberties rather than sexual ethics, while the Bishop of Manchester had focused on how the bill threatened the independence of local government.¹⁴⁶ These positions, although perfectly rational, hardly reassured Anglican Conservatives and it was left to lay Catholic peer and moral campaigner, Lord Longford, to forward the view that homosexuality was forbidden under Christian law.¹⁴⁷ The fact that some prelates supported the right of teaching of homosexuality in schools while at the same time appeared reluctant to enforce the Christian basis of RE in schools (as revealed in the

¹⁴⁰ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 9 March 1988, Vol.129, col.393.

¹⁴¹ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1987*, Vol.18, Vol.3, 11 November 1987, pp.913-56. See Appendix VIII on the attitudes on sexual morality within the Synod.

¹⁴² John Selwyn Gummer, 'Conserving the Family', p.315. At the same time, much criticism surrounded the Church's pamphlet *Foreword to Marriage* (London, 1984), which some argued failed to explicitly reinforce Biblical standards of sexual conduct.

¹⁴³ See for example, *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 15 December 1987, Vol.124, col.1002.

¹⁴⁴ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 11 January 1988, Vol.491, cols.1003.

¹⁴⁵ The Bishops of Rochester, Gloucester, Manchester and York voted against it, the Bishops of London and Chelmsford voted for it.

¹⁴⁶ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 2 February 1988, Vol.491, cols.998-9; 11 January 1988, Vol.491, cols.963-6.

¹⁴⁷ *Parl. Proc.*, HL Debs, 11 January 1988, Vol.491, col.995.

passing of the Education Act the same year), meant it was easy to dismiss the Church as retreating from its moral role and for Christian parliamentarians along with the moral lobby, to position themselves as the true promoters and defenders of Christian standards in public life.¹⁴⁸

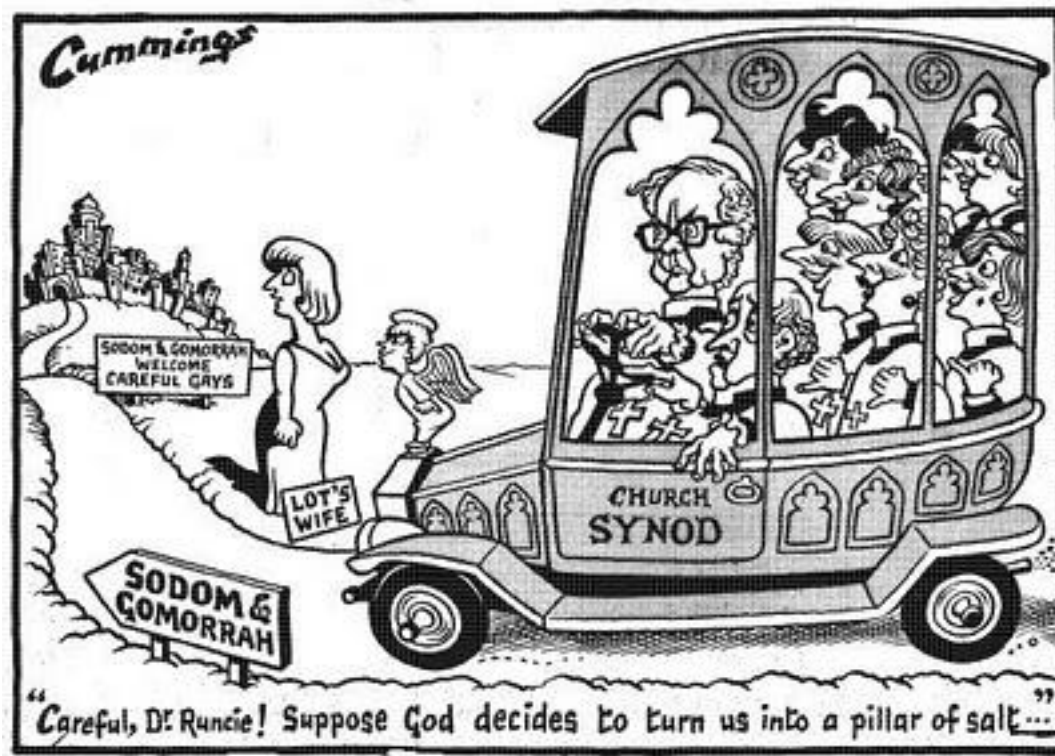


Fig. 1. *Daily Express*, 13 November 1987.

The accusation that the Church had willingly and woefully embraced the ‘new morality’ may have successfully rallied the traditionalist troops and made neat headlines but it was an extremely generalised claim. It did not acknowledge the fact that the Church’s approach to sexual ethics was far from uniform. The Church’s strict stance on abortion differed significantly from its position on contraception and divorce for example. Moreover, when Anglican leaders did make a plea for individual moral virtue – such as the Bishop of Birmingham’s statement on chastity in relation to AIDS – this was rarely reported by the press or supported by Conservative politicians. The Church of England, throughout its history, had always had a less moralistic culture than the Catholic Church as evidenced by

¹⁴⁸ An official Church statement *Issues in Human Sexuality* (London, 1991) was an attempt to respond to these criticisms, although the fact that it did not offer an outright condemnation of homosexuality meant that it failed to silence the Church’s critics.

the decision of the 1930 Lambeth Conference to sanction individual choice in respect to contraception.¹⁴⁹ As G.I.T Machin's survey of the Church during the twentieth century makes clear, the 1960s was not as much a moral watershed for the Church as traditionalists claimed, what is more accurate is that discussions about personal morality and sexual ethics within the Church have always historically been divided into two camps; those willing to accommodate to changing social trends and those fearful of any reordering of moral values. Such was the case in the 1930s, the 1960s, and again in the 1980s.

Nevertheless there was some validity in what the traditionalists were saying. Since the 1960s the Church leadership had appeared more and more comfortable talking about the morality of government and less and less confident about the morality of the individual. A point raised by John Gummer as early as 1971 in a book on the 'permissive society', in which he conveyed his shock that 'at a time in which the Church is questioning its infallibility in matters of faith and morals it should be acting as if it had a special kind of infallible judgement in matters of politics.'¹⁵⁰ Gummer was to a degree right, for this decade had seen a cultural shift within the Church on sexual ethics, away from a message of condemnation towards an effort to understand people's life choices. However, this did not reflect a complete capitulation to liberal progressiveness, but simply a belief, that in an era when morality had been liberalised, privatised and secularised, such tact would prove ineffective and counterintuitive. As David Sheppard elucidated in a letter to suffragan Bishop of Stepney in 1979, in which he explained why he did not speak out more fervently on the issue of homosexuality:

I have personally determined not to be involved more publicly than I need about this matter. I hope that it is not cowardice. My neck is exposed on a number of issues which I intend to try to see through for many years. I genuinely believe that there is a danger that a subject like this would be used by many of the more orthodox Christians as a reason for not listening to things that I believe I am meant to say about some of the other great human issues.¹⁵¹

Sheppard's comments illustrate the difference in priorities between the two factions within the Church. For Sheppard it was a question of influence, a point he elaborated in a letter to a parishioner in 1981 explaining the Church's apparent 'silence' on pornography. In the opinion of Sheppard, when the Church spoke disapprovingly of 'things connected with

¹⁴⁹ Machin, *Churches and Social Issues*, pp.86-96.

¹⁵⁰ Gummer, *The Permissive Society: Fact or Fantasy?*, p.163.

¹⁵¹ LCA, SP, Social Issues, Homosexuality file, Letter to the Bishop of Stepney, 16 November 1979.

sex', it was not 'very well listened to', yet in the realm of politics, on issues such as unemployment, race relations and poverty, Sheppard believed that the Church still retained some authority.¹⁵² Naturally this switch from the moral to the political made it vulnerable to accusations that its prophecy was conditioned by a desire for relevance in a secular age. This charge did have validity, but only in the same way that the traditionalist cause could also be said to be a response to the changing fortunes of Christianity in Britain.

In the eighties a new specific concern emerged. For not only did it seem that the Church had acquiesced on the 'new morality', but that the 'new morality' was filtering into the Church structures itself. This was evident in the debate about divorced clergy but was even more apparent and controversial over the issue of homosexual priests. The focus of this debate was not Christian standards in society, but the interpretation of these within the Church.¹⁵³ This would be a long and fractious debate which would further spilt the reformists and traditionalists at home and the Anglican Communion abroad, ruthlessly exposing the doctrinal divisions and cultural differences within the organisation in the process. This topic also greatly excited the tabloid press, which frequently ran stories speculating on the prevalence of homosexuality amongst the priesthood. As with tales of adulterous vicars, the press revelled in these supposed examples of clerical hypocrisy.¹⁵⁴ The long-term outcome of this internalisation of the debate about sexual ethics, however, was that the Church's opinion on questions of personal morality would be listened to less and less by the public and politicians.

During the eighties meanwhile, it is notable how prominent members of the Conservative frontbench (like their backbenchers) became increasingly vocal about the shortcomings of the Church's moral leadership.¹⁵⁵ For whilst the government tended not to get involved in ecclesiastical issues, the subject of morality held a particular interest. Thatcherite moralism, may not have resulted in reversing the 'permissive' legislation of the 1960s, however it remained a consistent rhetorical thread, recognised for its political value in appealing to the Tory faithful, the broader middle class and as a useful way of reproaching the more socially-liberal Labour and SDP-Alliance parties.¹⁵⁶ It was also

¹⁵² LCA, SP, Social Issues (2), Pornography file, Letter to John Heys Meador, 15 April 1981. Incidentally, Sheppard had testified against the publication of *Last Exit To Brooklyn* during its obscenity trial in 1967.

¹⁵³ In 1988, the offices of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement were evicted from St Botolph's parish in London. The Bishop of London took the matter to an ecclesiastical court to expel the group.

¹⁵⁴ In the mid-1990s the issue of homosexuality in the church began to dominate, especially as gay activists led a campaign of 'outing' clergymen.

¹⁵⁵ Joan Isaac, 'The New Right and the Moral Society', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.43, No.2, (April, 1990), pp.209-227 and 'The Politics of Morality in the UK', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.47, No.2, (April, 1994), pp.175-189.

¹⁵⁶ Holden, *Makers and Manners*, ch.6; Durham, *Sex and Politics*, p.131.

recognised as a way of undermining the Church's attacks on the moral failings of Thatcherism. *Faith in the City*, for example, was criticised by the government not only for its supposed Marxist theology but also its lack of attention to the family. In the latter part of the 1980s, in answer to the repeated criticisms of the Church and in a desire to couch Thatcherism within a more moralistic framework, government ministers turned their attention to lecturing the Church on its moral obligations and responsibilities in society. In October 1987, for example, Mrs Thatcher delivered a speech in which she argued that the Church's failure to assert moral discipline accounted for society's dependency on the secular state: 'When the authority of those institutions [the churches] is undermined because they haven't been forthright, it is then that people turn too much to the State.'¹⁵⁷ This message was one that clearly resonated with many within her parliamentary party and at the grassroots. The *Daily Mail* editorial the following day praised the Prime Minister's speech and contrasted it with the Church's 'pussy-footing' over AIDS.¹⁵⁸ A year later Home Secretary, Anglican Douglas Hurd, gave a speech to the General Synod in which he informed the assembled audience of clerics, bishops and laity that the Bible did not offer a blueprint for government but did provide resolute guidance on personal moral conduct. Hurd's message was clear; it was the Church's responsibility to strengthen individual moral standards in society rather than pass moral judgements on the government decisions.¹⁵⁹ A year later, Conservative backbencher, Sir Hal Millar, tabled a government-backed motion in the House of Commons on the moral responsibilities of the Church of England. Introducing the debate, Millar, in a highly partisan speech, stated that he found it 'odd and offensive' that bishops could deny the Creed, consider the ordination of divorced people and 'purport to celebrate homosexual marriage.'¹⁶⁰ The debate that followed indicated the widespread dissatisfaction amongst Conservative ranks concerning the Church's weak moral leadership and its unhealthy preoccupation with political issues. Speaking on behalf of the government, Home Office Minister John Patten, offered the Church leaders what he considered to be some worthy advice; to concentrate on 'spiritual guidance' rather than lecturing politicians on 'how to divide up the national cake.'¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ 'The Church Has Let us Down', *Daily Mail*, 26 October 1987. Incidentally, Runcie had given a lecture on the same day as Mrs Thatcher on the immorality of the market crash.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Douglas Hurd, 'God versus Caesar', *Church Times*, 9 September 1988; Hurd later explained that he had been sympathetic to the Church's political position in the 1980s, although he considered too statist: Hurd, *Memoirs* (London, 2003), p.363. See also the Archbishop of York's response to Hurd's speech: 'Public and Private Morality', 12 March 1988 reprinted in Habgood, *Confessions*, pp.48-52.

¹⁶⁰ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 13 February 1989, Vol.147, col.24.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, col.64.

Writing in 1990, in a book entitled *Christianity and Conservatism: Are they compatible?*, John Gummer lambasted the Church for its social approach to sin and emphasis on state salvation and urged it to rediscover a 'theology of judgment'.¹⁶² Gummer, however, remained doubtful whether his call would be listened to, and concluded therefore that it was his government, with its commitment to the family and individual responsibility, which was 'nearer the traditional understanding of the gospels than much of contemporary Christian social comment'.¹⁶³ Gummer's contention was that in its present guise, Anglicanism was not compatible with Conservatism or even Christianity. Gummer sought to offer some words of reassurance for Anglicans Conservative voters, suggesting that while they may have felt let down by the Church, they could feel confident that the government was taking its Christian responsibility seriously.

Anglican Political Theology

While developments in theology, governance and morality certainly heightened the sense of division between Church and the Conservative party, the main area of grievance – one which united both Anglican and non-Anglican Conservative MPs alike – was the Church's condemnation of its policies. As has been demonstrated in earlier chapters, the party and other factions within the New Right took great efforts to publicly counter the political protestations emanating from Anglican quarters. This was done through various means: by dismissing the clergy as ignorant and naïve, by discrediting their views as socialist, and by accusing the Church of neglecting their moral and spiritual duties. A sermon by Roman Catholic Conservative MP John Biggs-Davison entitled 'Christians can be Conservatives' delivered in a London parish in 1978 was typical of the sort of message emerging from New Right circles from the mid-1970s onwards and which was to become the standard response in the 1980s. Biggs-Davison began by laying out what he considered to be the doctrinal flaws of the social gospel, which had transformed the Church into 'little more than agencies of Oxfam, Shelter, the United Nations Association – or unqualified off shoots of the welfare state.'¹⁶⁴ He then went on to condemn its most extreme manifestation, liberation theology, which he deemed to be a Communist corruption of the Gospel. Taking the Edward Norman line, Biggs-Davison attributed the growth of social Christianity to a desire

¹⁶² Gummer, 'Conserving the Family', p.309; p.312.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, p.312.

¹⁶⁴ Copy of speech deposited in CCR, THCR 2/1/2/4, 'Christians can be Conservatives', 1 November 1978, p.6.

to be relevant in a secular age: 'perhaps they fear abandonment by the multitude and the loneliness their Master knew, so they adjust the eternal to the fashionable.'¹⁶⁵

Social Christianity, Conservatives repeatedly claimed, was not only a misinterpretation of the Scripture but also distracted the clergy from their true evangelical mission. In the opinion of Anglican Conservative MP John Stokes in 1984, the Church of England needed to 'get back to basic Christianity' for its secular political preoccupations would only result in the 'churches being left empty and the people of England engulfed in heathenism'.¹⁶⁶ The implication was that not only was the Church's position determined by secular priorities, but also that by pursuing this road the Church was inadvertently hastening the process of secularisation. Stokes' comments point to the way in which Anglican Conservatives were inclined to position themselves as defenders of the Christian nation, while at the same time accusing the Church of being consumed by a liberal internationalist outlook which was decidedly un-English. Runcie encountered such criticism when he delivered his 'pacifist' sermon for the Falkland's thanksgiving service, as did those clerics who stressed the West's obligations to the developing world.¹⁶⁷ This pointed to an underlying paranoia concerning the breach between Christianity, Conservatism and Englishness, for in the heightened climate of Thatcherite nationalism the Anglican hierarchy looked more than a little uncomfortable, preferring to express their spiritual patriotism by emphasising the duty of welfare rather than the glory of warfare.

It was not simply that the Church was intervening in political matters, but the way in which leaders proclaimed divine authority on these affairs. David Sheppard's accusation that it was impossible to be a Christian and vote Conservative seemed ample proof that the Church was unwilling to accept that Conservative politicians could be acting in sincere faith. For John Gummer, such intransigence merely confirmed the fact that a political rather than spiritual bias was at the core of the Anglican critique of Thatcherism. Speaking in 1984, soon after the Bishop of Durham's political enthronement sermon, for example, Gummer sought to disrobe the prelate's opinions of any spiritual authority: 'Mr Jenkins is plain Mr Jenkins when he gives me his political views'.¹⁶⁸ It is, however, highly unlikely that Conservatives would have criticised the Church for its politicisation of Christianity had the Anglican leadership endorsed the politics and policies of the New Right. For it was not the

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹⁶⁶ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 28 October 1986, Vol.103, col.203.

¹⁶⁷ See for example, Peter Bauer, 'Ecclesiastical Economics of the Third World: Envy Legitimised' and Bertie Everard, 'Unchristian Critiques of Multinationals: The Case of South Africa', in *The Kindness that Kills*, pp.21-30.

¹⁶⁸ John Gummer, 'Throne and Altar', 18 November 1984, copy located in MCL, BCP, Z Files, 2/3 Politics and Christianity, p.1.

fact that the Church were politicising the Gospel that Conservatives found objectionable, but that they were politicising it against the Right. It would be left to Mrs Thatcher to articulate the alternative; that is, the Christian basis of New Right philosophy centred on the doctrine of original sin, free will and liberty.

CHAPTER SIX

Conviction Politician: *Constructing the Thatcherite Theology*

'The Old Testament prophets did not say "Brothers, I want a consensus." They said "This is my faith and vision....If you believe it too, then come with me."' Margaret Thatcher, 1979.¹

David Frost: But do you believe there is a God or do you know there is a God?

Prime Minister: I believe there is a God.

David Frost: Do you know there is a God?

Prime Minister: Believing there is a God is knowing there is a God.

David Frost: Believing is knowing?

Prime Minister: Yes, indeed!

Margaret Thatcher in interview with David Frost, 1988.²

'Although I have always resisted the argument that a Christian has to be a Conservative, I have never lost my conviction that there is a deep and providential harmony between the kind of political economy I favour and the insights of Christianity.' Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, 1995.³

When, in 1978, Mrs Thatcher was asked for her opinion on the ordination of women in an interview with the *Catholic Herald*, her reply was rather non-committal: 'What you do has got to be somehow in touch with and in tune with the times, otherwise you cause friction and you mustn't cause friction if you have a positive message.'⁴ Such a vague response would never have been uttered by her fellow Anglican Conservatives, who considered it a key issue which would determine the credibility and direction of the Church of England. Margaret Thatcher, in contrast, tended to steer clear of doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters, and, as we shall see, only ever articulated Christianity in respect to how it shaped and directed politics. Drawing on the religious instruction of her childhood and influenced by the evangelical and conservative Christian revival of the 1970s, Mrs Thatcher deployed the language and doctrines of Christianity to legitimize her political philosophy. It was a theo-political world-view which weaved together secular and religious strands, such as choice and man's free will, sin and moral deviancy, national identity and Christianity, into an all-encompassing public doctrine, which was applied not only to the domestic political scene but also underscored her crusade against international Communism. Margaret Thatcher is therefore a pivotal figure in the story of the interrelationship between religion and politics in the 1980s, not simply because she was the figurehead of the British conservative

¹ Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*, p.77.

² Margaret Thatcher, TV interview for TV-AM, 30 December 1988, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107022> (accessed 12/03/2010).

³ Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, (London, 1995), p.554-5.

⁴ 'The Thatcher philosophy', *Catholic Herald*, 5 December 1978, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=103793> (accessed 12/03/2010).

movement, but also because she herself played a leading part in the development of the Christian basis of New Right philosophy during this period.

Despite the wealth of biographies on Margaret Thatcher, relatively few of these works have addressed her religion.⁵ Descriptions of her childhood usually serve as an explanation for Mrs Thatcher's ambition and identity, yet biographers have rarely delved any deeper into her Methodist upbringing or explored how her faith developed later in her life. Peter Riddell, for example, sees Thatcherism as a product of the 'English suburban and provincial middle-class' world of interwar Grantham, yet he confines his analysis to class culture and does not sufficiently explore her religious roots.⁶ Moreover, there is a degree to which Mrs Thatcher's religious views are obscured by the frequently cited but rather generalised maxim: 'Victorian values'. Although Nonconformity is believed to be an important element in this, its specific contribution has not adequately been unpacked. Theologian Graeme Smith offers the only existing analysis of Mrs Thatcher's 'theo-political' identity, which he labels as 'Anglo-Saxon Nonconformity'. Smith, however, does not contextualise her statements within contemporary developments within Christianity and her conflict with the Church of England, nor does he explore the ways in which Mrs Thatcher's religious protestations and missionary zeal contributed to her image and unique style of leadership.⁷

This chapter seeks to construct Mrs Thatcher's religio-political world-view through a detailed analysis of her speeches and writings. It will first address Mrs Thatcher's Methodist upbringing and, through an exploration of her father's sermons, will illustrate how her father's theo-political understanding, his tying of politics and faith, proved to be particularly influential. It will then illustrate how Mrs Thatcher rediscovered these values in the 1970s as a response to the social, economic and political turmoil of this decade. The second section will demonstrate the importance of evangelical language and rhythm to this discourse, revealing how Mrs Thatcher marketed herself as a missionary who aimed to bring about a national conversion to economic liberalism. The third section will explore in detail the ideas, beliefs and values which made up the 'Thatcherite theology'. Broken down into key themes, it shows how Mrs Thatcher weaved together notions of man's free will, the doctrine of original sin and the Protestant work ethic into a comprehensive Biblical

⁵ Leo Abse, *Margaret, Daughter of Beatrice: A Politician's Psychobiography of Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1989). John Campbell only deals with Mrs Thatcher's religious upbringing in the first volume of his biography: Campbell, *The Grocer's Daughter*; In her assessment on the values of Thatcherism, Shirley Letwin only briefly mentions Christianity: Letwin, *Anatomy of Thatcherism*, p.344.

⁶ Riddell, *The Thatcher Era and its Legacy* (London, 1991).

⁷ Smith, 'Margaret Thatcher's Christian Faith'.

defence of the free market and small government. The aim here is to show how Mrs Thatcher was influenced by her Methodist heritage and the way in which she engaged, reflected and complemented the contemporary theo-political thinking within the Christian conservative movement. The chapter will end with an analysis of the aim and purpose and ultimately, the credibility of the Prime Minister's religious rhetoric to a secular electorate.

I. From Finkin Street to Downing Street

As Heather Nunn has correctly judged, Mrs Thatcher's tales of home life in suburban Lincolnshire built on the values of thrift, community spirit and responsibility, operated as a 'template for the reconstruction of a stable nation'.⁸ Margaret Thatcher's personal journey as a lower middle-class woman who had overcome gender and class barriers to achieve the highest office in the land was constructed as a narrative of self-responsibility and hard work, which infused 'her political message with a personal authority'.⁹ Not wishing to dispute the role that Grantham played in the image of Margaret Thatcher, the aim here is to uncover the real influence of Methodism and specifically, her lay-preacher father in shaping the mind and manner of Mrs Thatcher.¹⁰ The majority of the evidence for this comes not from the personal recollections of Mrs Thatcher herself, but an examination of her father's sermon notes, where connections will be made between the theo-political ideas of Albert Roberts and Mrs Thatcher's own religious protestations as Prime Minister.

There is no doubt that religion played a central role in the early life of Mrs Thatcher. In her memoirs, *The Path to Power*, Margaret Thatcher describes how her upbringing was 'intensely religious', with attendance at Finkin Street Methodist chapel three times a week, in addition to twice on Sundays.¹¹ Religious and social life revolved around the chapel, with the young Margaret a member of both the Methodist Youth Guild and the choir. Strict Sabbatarians, Sunday in the Roberts' household was for worship and little else, with board games and even newspapers forbidden. Frivolous activities such as cinema-going or dancing were frowned upon, and although, alcohol was kept in the house for guests, the Roberts themselves were teetotallers. All of this made for a rather puritan and

⁸ Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*, p.75.

⁹ Ibid., p.65; ch.3.

¹⁰ Campbell sees Mrs Thatcher's portrayal of Grantham as largely an exercise in 'image management': *The Grocer's Daughter*, p.1.

¹¹ Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p.5. For an account of Thatcher's religious upbringing see Campbell, *The Grocer's Daughter*, chs.1-2; Thatcher, *The Path To Power*, ch.1; Tricia Murray, *Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1978), pp.13-29; George Gardiner, *Margaret Thatcher: From Childhood to Leadership* (London, 1975), pp.13-31.

drab existence, which, even Mrs Thatcher later admitted, could be perceived as ‘rather solemn’.¹²

Her father, Alfred Roberts, looms large in the Grantham mythological tale, like an ‘Old Testament prophet’ offering guidance and imparting onto his daughter a political and moral vision, which she would eventually fulfil as Prime Minister.¹³ As Margaret Thatcher herself admitted after winning her first election in 1979: ‘He brought me up to believe all the things I do believe and they are the values on which I have fought the election...I owe almost everything to my father.’¹⁴ Further confirmation of this also came from her sister, Muriel Roberts, who commented simply: ‘to know Margaret, you have to know him.’¹⁵ The figure of Alfred Roberts – preacher, shopkeeper and councillor – is well known. A paragon of civic duty, he was deeply immersed in the political and religious associational culture of interwar Grantham. He was an elected member of the town council, a part-time Justice of the Peace, president of the Chamber of Trade, President of Rotary, a director of the Grantham Building Society, a director of the Trustee Savings Bank, chairman of the local National Savings Movement, a governor of the local boys’ and girls’ grammar schools and chairman of the Workers’ Educational Association.¹⁶ This was in addition to his religious commitments. He was trustee of ten churches in Lincolnshire and, as a lay preacher, toured the county delivering sermons and meeting prominent Methodists, including Donald Soper who, incidentally, would go on to become a leading critic of his daughter’s government fifty years later.¹⁷

A collection of Alfred Roberts’ sermon notes, deposited in Mrs Thatcher’s personal archive and dated between c. 1941 and 1950, offer a crucial insight into the religious instruction Margaret Thatcher was exposed to as a child. Unsurprisingly, the sermons contain all the essential ingredients of the Methodist faith, with an emphasis on individual belief, the work ethic and moral virtue. Frequent references were made to Martin Luther’s edict on individual salvation by faith alone while the Roman Catholic understanding of penance and the role of the priest as an essential intermediary between God and man, was also dismissed as contrary to Biblical teaching. He also denounced those churches tied to temporal power, judging that under the ‘tutelage of King’s and Princes’ the Word of God

¹² Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p.8.

¹³ Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*, p.76.

¹⁴ Wendy Webster, *Not a Man to Match Her* (London, 1990), p.6.

¹⁵ Kenneth Harris, *Thatcher* (London, 1988), p.59.

¹⁶ Campbell, *The Grocer’s Daughter*, p.12.

¹⁷ Mark Peel, *The Last Wesleyan: a life of Donald Soper* (Lancaster, 2008).

had been led astray.¹⁸ On the subject of man's internal struggle with faith and sin, Roberts assured his parishioners that 'strength comes from within' and that 'The Kingdom of God is within you'.¹⁹ In another sermon, Roberts repeated this claim, preaching that God's overpowering presence was in the 'heart and mind' of every individual: 'His Spirit dwelling in us casts out our fear and dread of anything that can overtake us.'²⁰ Roberts placed a high priority on the importance of the work ethic and of discipline, dedication and motivation in secular as well as religious life. 'You possess all you need', he told his fellow Methodists, 'There is nothing to acquire. Learn to recognise what is already yours.'²¹ And in another note, idleness was deemed a sin, for 'a lazy man' was one who had 'lost his soul already'.²² By way of illuminating this message of perseverance and studiousness, Roberts preached a parable about a snail climbing a cherry tree which was determined to get to the top, undeterred by apprehension or the negative opinions of a sneering slug. The snail is presented as the embodiment of willpower and tenacity.²³ Such resolution and self-belief, Roberts judged, emanated from the certainty of faith, which 'prevents us being tortured by agony of doubt'.²⁴ Certainly these musings on the personal qualities of hard work, commitment and resolution personally shaped Mrs Thatcher for those who knew her as an MP frequently commented on her unrelenting studiousness and resolve. Yet the influence of her father's message was not confined to the personal, for the themes of resolution versus doubt and of idleness versus work would also be used to great political effect by his daughter when Prime Minister.

According to John Campbell, there was no 'distinction between commercial, political and religious values' in the Roberts' household, which was led by a man who was a leader in each sphere, as shop owner, councillor and lay preacher.²⁵ This cross fertilisation between the religious and the political is clearly evident in his sermon notes. Roberts, for example, addressed the theme of social Christianity, a topic, which was then acquiring

¹⁸ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes b, 1 January 1941, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=109899>, (accessed 12/04/10).

¹⁹ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes c, 1 January 1941, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=109900>, (accessed 12/04/10).

²⁰ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes a, 1 January 1941, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=109898>, (accessed 12/04/10).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Alfred Roberts, sermon notes d, 1 January 1950, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=109925>, (accessed 12/04/10).

²³ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes a.

²⁴ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes b. Margaret Thatcher's childhood copy of the Methodist Catechism displays the same emphasis on sin, thrift, work ethic and redemption through faith alone. Margaret Roberts' Methodist Catechism, 1 January 1944, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=109910>, (accessed 12/04/10).

²⁵ Campbell, *The Grocer's Daughter*, p.15.

greater respectability and prominence with William Temple's *Christianity and Social Order* penned in 1942 and with the ecumenical COPEC conference signalling a growing political consensus between the denominations.²⁶ In Roberts' opinion, a church that was preoccupied with its 'social conscience' was in danger of becoming 'a glorified discussion group' and was negating its true calling as a place for evangelism where 'men and women can come quite sure that their hungry hearts can find the living bread' of faith.²⁷ Mrs Thatcher would famously take a similar line against the social Anglicanism of the 1980s, proclaiming, in her famous Sermon on the Mound in 1988, that: 'Christianity is about spiritual redemption, not social reform.'²⁸ For her father, however, the pressing social issue during the interwar period was not 'poverty', which he believed had been solved, but affluence, for the churches had a responsibility to preach that 'no man's soul can be satisfied' with a 'materialistic philosophy.'²⁹ This aspect of Alderman Robert's theology was notably less prominent in his daughter's public doctrine who tended not to emphasise ungodly associations with increasing wealth.

A notable feature of Roberts' sermons was the fusion between political language and religious doctrine. On the subject of the universality and liberty of faith, for example, Roberts stated that God 'refuses to put grace on a tariff'.³⁰ In Roberts' opinion, just as there should be no restrictions on the market, nor should there be a 'tariff' imposed on God's grace. Here Roberts was of course, referencing the key debate, which dominated interwar British politics: tariffs verses free trade.³¹ As a Liberal, Roberts was a keen advocate of the latter, yet more importantly, this statement inferred that there was a convergence between the universal availability of grace and the free market; a concept, which, as we shall see, Mrs Thatcher would articulate with even equal passion years later.³²

As a dissenter it is perhaps not surprising that Roberts laid great emphasis on the importance of religious freedom. Yet more revealing, is the political language and comparisons he used to criticise its opposite: religious uniformity.³³ In one instance it is

²⁶ Hastings, *History of English Christianity*, ch.18.

²⁷ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes c.

²⁸ Margaret Thatcher, Church of Scotland Speech, reprinted in Raban, *God, Man and Mrs Thatcher*, p.9.

²⁹ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes c.

³⁰ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes b. Underlining is Roberts' own.

³¹ Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000* (London, 2nd edition, 2004), p.153-4.

³² Alfred Roberts been a supporter of the Liberal party but had later switched to the Conservatives: Campbell, *The Grocer's Daughter*, ch.1.

³³ Historically Methodism has always been aligned with progressive politics, however, this tended to be only the Primitive branch of Methodism and not the Wesleyan group to which the Roberts' belonged. Although the two strands of Methodism (Primitive and Wesleyan) were to unite in 1932, this did not happen until after the war in Grantham so the distinction is an important one: Campbell, *The Grocer's Daughter*, p.15-6.

denounced as ‘a denominational closed shop’, with compulsory trade union membership compared to mandatory affiliation to a particular faith. In another sermon, uniformity is likened to totalitarianism for both sought to restrict individual freedom. ‘Uniformity’, he argued, ‘can be a soul destroying agent, as evil as totalitarianism, and totalitarianism, can end in the systematic dehumanisation of man.’³⁴ Mrs Thatcher would adopt exactly the same type of language in her ideological battle against communism and socialism. A theological notion of individual liberty and man’s relationship with God underpinned Alfred Roberts’ political outlook. In another sermon written in 1950, at a time when the Attlee government was constructing the ‘New Jerusalem’ and radically extending the powers of the state, Roberts felt the need to remind the congregation of its restrictive possibilities in that it offered no route to redemption: ‘Men, nations, races, or any particular generation cannot be saved by ordinances, power, legislation. We worry about all this, and our faith becomes weak and faltering.’³⁵ These were sentiments Mrs Thatcher would later reiterate as Prime Minister and the direct influence of her father on this point is illustrated by the fact that she quoted this extract in her memoirs.³⁶

Yet what of the intervening years between Finkin Street and Downing Street? While at Oxford, Margaret Thatcher continued to attend Methodist chapel and joined the choir, although she channelled most of her efforts into politics, leading the University’s Conservative Association, where she encountered a recently-demobbed Robert Runcie.³⁷ In 1951 she married Denis Thatcher in John Wesley’s Chapel in London and two years later the twins Carol and Mark were christened there.³⁸ Margaret Thatcher never forced her children to attend Church, which, as she later explained, was because she did not wish to inflict on her children the same strict religious upbringing that she herself had had.³⁹ We do know that at some point in the 1950s Margaret Thatcher converted to Anglicanism. Speaking in 1978 she clarified her reasons behind this: ‘I went for something a little more formal’ in service and ‘formality in the underlying theology.’⁴⁰ It could be that this switch was for political rather than religious considerations, for in the days when Conservatives

³⁴ Alfred Roberts, Sermon notes c.

³⁵ Alfred Roberts, Sermon notes d.

³⁶ Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p.163-4.

³⁷ Carpenter, *Robert Runcie: The Reluctant Archbishop*, p.86.

³⁸ This may have been for practical rather than religious reasons for Denis was a divorcee and Nonconformist churches had a more relaxed policy than the Church of England in respect to remarriage. Margaret Thatcher continues to have links with the chapel. She and Denis celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary there in 2001 and she is currently patron of the Friends.

³⁹ ‘I did not insist that they went to church. I think that was probably because I’d had so much insistence myself.’: Murray, *Margaret Thatcher*, p.54.

⁴⁰ ‘The Thatcher philosophy’, *Catholic Herald*, 22 December 1978.

were still assumed to be practising Anglicans, Mrs Thatcher's Methodism might have posed an obstacle to her political ambitions. This is reinforced by the fact that the above quotation is the only reference (that the author is aware of) that Mrs Thatcher made about her adopted Church. Nonetheless, if Mrs Thatcher had a denominational identity it was certainly Nonconformist rather than Anglican.

As a young female Conservative candidate and later as an MP in the 1950s and 60s, Mrs Thatcher delivered numerous talks to congregations (both free churches and Anglican) cultivating an image of a politician of faith. In 1951, as the prospective nominee for Dartford in Kent, she gave a speech to the local Free Church Council. According to the *Dartford Chronicle*, it began with a text from Genesis and wove together themes of patriotism, Christian decency and the religious calling to public service; all qualities that Miss Roberts, reportedly a politician of 'sound Christian convictions', sought to personify.⁴¹ The young candidate gave other talks to congregations while canvassing in the Kent constituency. This is hardly surprising given that Dartford had a strong dissenting tradition, and even in the 1950s, the churches remained the main access point for the community and its votes.⁴²

Mrs Thatcher, however, clearly felt comfortable speaking on religious topics and preaching from the pulpit and, as the elected MP for Finchley, continued to lecture to local church groups. In 1963, Mrs Thatcher gave a speech to the Christ Church Youth Fellowship on 'What it means to be a Christian Member of Parliament'. Interestingly, she offered a traditional Tory-Anglican view, praising the constitutional link between the spiritual and the temporal within the English constitution. In a sentiment worthy of William Temple, she affirmed that freedom and democracy could not be sustained on 'an empty stomach' and that Britain as a 'Christian nation' provided this political nourishment through the welfare state.⁴³ Here, Margaret Thatcher's sentiments were more a reflection of the ethos of Macmillan Conservatism than her own religious heritage. During the 1960s, however, she, along with fellow Conservatives, voiced her fears about rising 'permissiveness' and declining religiosity. In an interview with the *Finchley Press*, for example, she called for the 'reversal of the permissive society', which, in her opinion, had made man

⁴¹ Speech to Dartford Free Church Council, Dartford, 30 May 1951, report from the *Dartford Chronicle*, 8 June 1951, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/100905> (accessed 12/05/10).

⁴² Dartford's Protestant martyrs had been chronicled by John Bunyan while John Wesley was also reported to have preached there.

⁴³ Speech to Christ Church Youth Fellowship, 15 December 1963, report from the *Finchley Press*, 20 December 1963, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=101218> (accessed 12/05/10).

‘slave to his own appetites.’⁴⁴ Mrs Thatcher’s rhetoric, however, did not quite match her voting record. Far from being opposed to the ‘permissive’ legislation, she had in fact supported the legalisation of homosexuality and abortion (although she had been against divorce reform and the repeal of the death penalty).⁴⁵ As this brief survey of her early political career suggests, although Mrs Thatcher fashioned herself as a woman of faith, she did not display the same zealousness or Nonconformist outlook which would characterise her later political life.⁴⁶

It is evident, however, that just as Mrs Thatcher’s politics underwent a transformation in the mid-1970s, so she also rediscovered her Nonconformist roots. The faith, values and certainties, which she had heard delivered weekly from the pulpit of Finkin Street Chapel, assumed a new relevance and meaning in the political and moral confusion of 1970s Britain. And so as the postwar consensus collapsed and the Conservative party veered to the Right, Mrs Thatcher deliberately evoked Nonconformist ideas such as self-reliance, hard work and moral restraint as the only true path for a nation overwhelmed by the excesses of bureaucratic welfare, union militancy and immoral conduct. What this analysis of her father’s sermons reveals is that the Grantham tale was not simply an artificial construction of Margaret Thatcher’s imagination or one dreamt up by Conservative spin doctors, but a real experience. Her upbringing had instilled a sense of class and cultural identity, but also a specific religious consciousness and an understanding in how faith related to politics. Margaret Thatcher’s Nonconformist religious ethos and specifically that of her father, provided the means, language and motifs through which she articulated the neo-Conservative agenda. Reference to her childhood religious values, therefore, would always be articulated in terms of their contemporary relevance. Thus Mrs Thatcher constantly shifted between past and present tense when speaking about her life in Grantham: as the following comments made in an interview with the *Sun* reveals:

we were brought up to work. It was a sin not to work. Idleness itself was a sin. We always did work. We were also brought up to be involved with people. Everything we did. We had a shop which automatically involved us with people, we went to Church you are automatically involved with people, you do all sorts of voluntary work you are automatically involved

⁴⁴ *Finchley Press*, 2 January 1970, quoted in Campbell, *The Grocer’s Daughter*, p.191.

⁴⁵ In her memoirs, Margaret Thatcher offered a defence of her voting record on these issues claiming that she had not realised that this legislation would lead to ‘a more callous, selfish and irresponsible society’: Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p.152.

⁴⁶ Historians have also remarked how Mrs Thatcher seemed to undergo a political transformation during the 1970s, remarking on the lack of consistency with her earlier political position: Campbell, *The Grocer’s Daughter*; chs.9-10; Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*, pp.12-42.

with people. I just suppose I've seen my father work extremely hard, my mother worked extremely hard, we had to work extremely hard to climb your way up the ladder as education mattered tremendously.⁴⁷

Mrs Thatcher always painted her interwar childhood as Victorian, evoking romantic idealized visions of a prosperous and industrious nation, thriving under *laissez faire* capitalism and Protestant values and held together by the philanthropic and communitarian civic culture that complemented this economic order. Recollections of her childhood, therefore, did not operate as mere nostalgia, or sentimentality, but were projected as a full-bodied political programme and as a relevant set of values, which needed to be installed in Britain. Nonetheless, it was not simply in the articulation of Nonconformist principles where the influence of her religious heritage could be deciphered, but also the way in which she fashioned herself as a conviction politician and packaged neo-liberalism as a religious endeavour.

II. Thatcherism as a Conversion Narrative, 1975-1983

Addressing a congregation in the city church of St Lawrence Jewry in 1981, Margaret Thatcher proclaimed that 'unless the spirit of the nation which has hitherto sustained us is renewed, our national way of life will perish.'⁴⁸ The missionary zeal and evangelical tone here is demonstrative of the way in which Margaret Thatcher presented herself as a prophet leading the British people out of the dark days of national decay and moral decline and into the path of economic and moral salvation. Margaret Thatcher was not the first to envision neo-liberalism as a religious cause. Most famously, Keith Joseph had described his switch to economic liberalism in conversion-like terms, delivering a series of speeches in 1974, in which he renounced the false dogma of consensus politics and declared his newfound faith in the market economy. As he wrote a year later: 'it was only in April 1974 that I was converted to Conservatism. (I had thought I was a Conservative but I now see that I was not really one at all).'⁴⁹ In one important speech, which is now famous for scuppering Joseph's leadership ambitions, he presented the state of the nation as an economic and moral challenge whereby national decline, economic stagnation, industrial unrest, social dependency and moral deviancy were all interlinked. Tying together the fate of the nation, community and the individual, Joseph called for the revitalisation of British 'civilised

⁴⁷ Interview with The Sun, 6 November 1989,

<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107430> (accessed 19/06/10).

⁴⁸ Margaret Thatcher, Speech at St Lawrence Jewry, 'The Spirit of the Nation', 4 March 1981, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=104587>, (accessed 18/05/10).

⁴⁹ Quoted in Denham & Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, p.250.

values': 'If we cannot restore them to health, our nation can be utterly ruined.'⁵⁰ On hearing the speech, Mary Whitehouse was said to have commented: 'the people of Britain have been like a sheep without a shepherd. But now they have found one.'⁵¹ Whitehouse was right to recognise the religious fervour of this political vision, despite identifying the wrong 'shepherd'.

Margaret Thatcher, after winning the ballot for the leadership of the party, also adopted this discursive framework, couching her political vision in Christianised language and doctrine with even greater confidence and certainty than the Jewish Keith Joseph. This evangelical tone featured heavily in the early part of her leadership from 1975 until her second election victory in 1983, serving to reinforce her position as leader and to legitimise her policies amidst increasing criticism and doubt. In 1981 in a speech to the Conservative Central Council, for example, Mrs Thatcher offered the following vindication for her government's controversial budget which had significantly cut borrowing in order to reduce interest rates: 'This is the road I am resolved to follow. This is the path I must go. I ask all who have the spirit – the bold, the steadfast and the young in heart – to stand and join with me as we go forward. For there is no other company in which I would travel.'⁵²

As Heather Nunn has analysed, the Thatcherite public doctrine relied heavily on Biblical imagery such as Babylon, the exile from Egypt and the Ten Commandments. Throughout her premiership, religious imagery was drawn upon to present Mrs Thatcher as a woman of resolve and force operating in a man's world and as a guiding light amidst the chaos and confusion. It also served to legitimise her conflicts against the IRA, Argentina, the unions and communism, by presenting these in terms of strict duel between good and evil.⁵³ According to Nunn, an evangelical structure and rhythm, encapsulated in her famous mantra 'There is no alternative', became Mrs Thatcher's signature tone, one which contrasted sharply with the 'managerial rationality' of her predecessor Edward Heath.⁵⁴ It was deliberately deployed to differentiate Thatcherism from 'wet' Conservatism, as Mrs Thatcher pointedly remarked: 'The Old Testament prophets did not say "Brothers, I want a consensus." They said "This is my faith and vision....If you believe it too, then come with me."⁵⁵ Mrs Thatcher was not the first nor would she be the last to anoint her political

⁵⁰ Sir Keith Joseph, Speech at Edgbaston ("our human stock is threatened"), 19 October 1974, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=101830>, (accessed 23/05/10).

⁵¹ Denham & Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, p.267.

⁵² Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the Conservative Central Council, Cardiff City Hall, 28 March 1981 in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.135.

⁵³ Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*, chs.2-3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.47

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.77.

vision with the language of faith, yet in many ways she was unique because of the secular context in which she operated, the confidence and boldness with which she proclaimed her public doctrine, the extent to which she relied upon this discourse for her personal and political authority and, as we shall see, the way in which she consciously drew upon the contemporary evangelical and traditionalist movements within Christianity.⁵⁶

This preaching style came naturally to a woman who had spent much of her childhood sitting in the pews listening to her father deliver a message on the importance of conviction. Mrs Thatcher recounts in her memoirs how as a child her father had bestowed on her an independence of mind and personal resolve.⁵⁷ And her father's sermon notes contain some further reflections on how he believed this could be achieved:

Your task demands and deserves sheer hard work. Sweat of brains and discipline of soul. Such toil and care can never be wasted for under God you desire your sermon to make a difference to human lives and lead them more thoroughly to surrender to the sovereignty of Christ.⁵⁸

Mrs Thatcher would certainly apply these qualities, even though it was to be in a secular rather than spiritual context. Mrs Thatcher, however, always liked to portray herself as a preacher and often spoke of her politics and leadership in missionary terms:

You've got to take everyone along with you...you can only get other people in tune with you by being a little evangelical about it...I'm not a consensus politician or a pragmatic politician: I'm a conviction politician. And I believe in the politics of persuasion: it's my job to put forward what I believe and try to get people to agree with me.⁵⁹

According to her father it was about evoking the instincts within man, 'whenever you speak to men in the name of Jesus Christ unseen instincts deep within them are reinforcing every word.'⁶⁰ This was a theme, which ran throughout Mrs Thatcher's discourse, for she always presented herself as an instinctive politician in tune with the popular will of the majority, as she stated in 1975: 'It is our duty, our purpose...to sound the trumpets clearly and boldly, so

⁵⁶ Harvey Thomas, who had previously acted as the chief organiser for Billy Graham's mass religious rallies, was appointed as Presentations Director at Conservative Central Office in 1978. In the run up to the 1983 election, Thomas organised a Conservative youth rally at Wembley Stadium, echoing Billy Graham's evangelical events, but, according to Campbell, the event was not a great success. American evangelical culture, it seems, was not easily transferable to British politics.: Campbell, *The Grocer's Daughter*, p.347.

⁵⁷ Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p.6.

⁵⁸ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes b.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Kenneth Harris, *Thatcher*, p.109.

⁶⁰ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes b.

that all can hear them. Then we shall not have to convert people to our principles. They will simply rally to those which truly are their own.’⁶¹ What Thatcher called ‘instinct’, others, notably Stuart Hall, called ‘authoritarian populism’; a deliberate exploitation of the base and selfish motivations of the electorate. Mrs Thatcher, however, tended to contrast her populist antennae with the intellectualism and elitism of the Establishment.⁶² Such anti-intellectualism appears to have been something which her Nonconformist father also appreciated. According to Alfred Roberts, in order to inspire faith and conviction in man: ‘have something to say, say it as clearly as you can’ for ‘the idea that the way to reach the human heart is to bypass the human understanding is a sadly mistaken strategy.’⁶³ In both style and substance therefore, Mrs Thatcher’s father seemed to have left an indelible mark, and one which she readily acknowledged: ‘Deep in their instincts people find what I am saying and doing right. And I know it is, because that is the way I was brought up.’⁶⁴

III. The Gospel According to Mrs Thatcher

It is not simply at an oratorical level that this Nonconformist heritage can be detected, for religious doctrine also played a central role in underpinning Mrs Thatcher’s political ideology. Any survey of the Prime Minister’s speeches will reveal the key themes of economic and individual freedom, patriotism and populism and law and order, yet to this list must also be added Christianity. So is it possible to demonstrate a consistent use of religion and a coherent ‘Thatcherite theology’? Unlike Enoch Powell, Mrs Thatcher did not write or comment in any great detail about her personal religious faith or spirituality. Instead, it is in her elucidation of a public doctrine that Mrs Thatcher revealed her theological outlook.

During her time as leader of the Conservative party, Margaret Thatcher delivered four key speeches on Christianity. These were: the Iain Macleod Memorial lecture in 1977 to the London Young Conservatives; the 1978 sermon entitled ‘I Believe’ delivered in St Lawrence Jewry Church in London; a second lecture ‘The Spirit of the Nation’ at St Lawrence Jewry in 1981 (this time as Prime Minister); and finally a speech to the Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1988.⁶⁵ This was in addition to numerous interviews, penned articles, and public statements in which she reiterated her core message. These declarations

⁶¹ Speech to the Conservative Central Council, 15 March 1975 in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.21.

⁶² Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*, ch.3.

⁶³ Alfred Roberts, sermon notes a.

⁶⁴ Young, *One of Us*, p.208.

⁶⁵ In terms of audience, three of these speeches were delivered to ‘believers’, at either the Church of St Lawrence Jewry or the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. All of these sermons were extensively covered in the press thus their message reached far beyond the audience in the pews.

all followed a similar discursive formula: an exposition of the Christian Revelation, the application of this to politics, an assertion of the ideological harmony between Christianity and Conservatism/capitalism, and its complete antithesis to both socialism/Marxism.

There are obvious problems in attributing a politician's public statements as their own given the reliance on speechwriters. Mrs Thatcher, however, was notoriously hands-on in the writing of her public statements, often re-drafting them even after her aides had printed off the final copy.⁶⁶ The playwright Ronald Millar, who penned many of Mrs Thatcher's speeches and provided her with some of her now infamous lines, explained that when he drafted an address: 'Her views, her opinions, her kind of language and her guidance were behind every syllable.'⁶⁷ In respect to the 'religious speeches' we do know that right-wing journalist and Anglican T.E. Utley provided some of the ideas and text for the St Lawrence Jewry 1978 sermon and also helped with the draft of her speech to the Church of Scotland just before he died in 1988.⁶⁸ Brian Griffiths, then head of her policy unit, was also believed to have been the inspiration behind the 1988 speech. Even so, Utley and Griffiths' input merely demonstrate the cross-fertilisation between Mrs Thatcher's public doctrine and the conservative and evangelical movement within the Church.

Margaret Thatcher rarely referred to the institutional churches in her speeches preferring to speak in broader terms about Christianity, Scripture and popular religious culture – she frequently cited her favourite hymns and poetry, particularly the writings of C. S. Lewis and Rudyard Kipling for instance.⁶⁹ It was a doctrine rooted in the authority of the Bible and displayed a preference for the Old Testament over the New, with the more prescriptive Ten Commandments quoted more often than the Sermon on the Mount for example. The overriding theme was not personal spirituality, but her understanding of the synthesis between religious and political values, specifically the theological coherence between Christianity and Conservatism.

In 1977, delivering the Iain Macleod memorial lecture, Mrs Thatcher reminded the audience of the historic connection between Conservatism and Christianity. 'The Tories began as a Church party', she affirmed, 'concerned with the Church and state...Religion gives us not only our values....but also our historical roots.'⁷⁰ Despite this explicit reference to the traditional connection between Church and party, Mrs Thatcher's public doctrine, as

⁶⁶ Robin Harris, 'Introduction' in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, pp.xiv-xviii; Ronald Millar, *The View From the Wings; West End, West Coast, Westminster* (London, 1993), ch.15.

⁶⁷ Millar, *View from the Wings*, p.283.

⁶⁸ Margaret Thatcher, 'Foreword' in Moore & Heffer (eds.), *A Tory Seer*.

⁶⁹ Mrs Thatcher reportedly spent 1988 reading the Old Testament: Young, *One of Us*, p.426.

⁷⁰ Margaret Thatcher, Iain Macleod Memorial Lecture in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.61.

we shall see, owed very little to this heritage, and was in both style and substance remarkably distinct from the Tory-Anglican tradition personified in Harold Macmillan. If Macmillan's theo-political outlook was paternalist, high-anglican and consensual, then Mrs Thatcher's in contrast was evangelical, culturally Nonconformist, and emphasized the values of respectability, self-reliance and the work ethic. The Archbishop of York, John Habgood clearly thought so, commenting in a letter to a parishioner in 1983: 'I would say that she takes it seriously though her religion is perhaps more individualistic than that of Harold Macmillan.'⁷¹

Individualism

The Archbishop was right, for the cornerstone of Mrs Thatcher's public doctrine was man's individual relationship with God. Speaking in terms that displayed her Nonconformist upbringing, Mrs Thatcher time and time again reiterated the individualistic basis of the Revelation. At the Iain Macleod Memorial lecture in 1977, for example, she affirmed that man was entirely responsible for 'working out his own salvation.'⁷² Preaching from the St Lawrence Jewry pulpit three years later, Mrs Thatcher elucidated further on this point:

It is to individuals that the Ten Commandments are addressed. In the statements, "honour thy father and thy mother", "thou shalt not steal", "though shalt not bear false witness", and so on, the "thou" to whom these resounding imperatives are addressed is you and me. In the same way, the New Testament is preoccupied with the individual, with his need for forgiveness and for the Divine strength which comes to those who sincerely accept it.⁷³

As the above sentiments suggest, Mrs Thatcher believed that there was an underlying political message in this religious doctrine, for if faith was predicated on the relationship between God and individual, then the same should apply in the political sphere. Like her fellow Christian economic liberals, Margaret Thatcher argued that as Christianity was a call to men individually rather than to collective society, it should follow that political choices should reside with the citizen rather than the state. Conservatism, which was rooted in the individual, was thus lauded as closer to the Christian ideal than socialism. 'Whereas socialists begin with society', Thatcher told the audience at the Macleod Memorial Lecture,

⁷¹ YUL, BI, BP1/HAB/1-2, Letter to parishioner, (name withheld), 24 November 1983.

⁷² Margaret Thatcher, Iain Macleod Memorial Lecture in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.60.

⁷³ Margaret Thatcher, 'The Spirit of the Nation', 1981.

‘we (Conservatives) start with Man.’⁷⁴ There was no room for any intermediaries such as the priest in Mrs Thatcher’s theology, just as there was no room for intermediary institutions such as local government or unions in her political analysis: such agencies interfered with, rather than aided, the relationship between the individual and government. As commentator Jonathan Raban rightly noted, one of the key aspects of Mrs Thatcher’s theo-political vision was that ‘man shall stand as nakedly before his Government as he does before his Maker.’⁷⁵

By way of explicating the social and political ramifications of this individualistic message, Mrs Thatcher unpicked what she considered to be the real meaning of the Christian maxim: ‘Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself’. Speaking at the Iain Macleod lecture, Mrs Thatcher explained that it was the ‘thyself’ part of the sentiment which was important. The Christian doctrine of interdependence did not mean to ‘denigrate’ the self or ‘elevate love of others above it’, but worked on the assumption that ‘concern for self’ was something to be expected and one, which merely demanded ‘that this be extended to others.’ In an interpretation that no doubt incensed many Anglican clergy, Mrs Thatcher proclaimed that the real meaning of this axiom, therefore, was that ‘self-regard’ was ‘the root of regard for one’s fellows.’⁷⁶ The aim here was to counter the supposition that Christian duty to others should supplant or suppress personal responsibility, while the underlying political intention was to disprove the often-quoted Biblical basis for state socialism. Mrs Thatcher sought to offer an alternative understanding of how Christian benevolence to others was fulfilled, for ‘generosity’ she proclaimed was ‘born in the hearts of men and women’ and could not be ‘manufactured by politicians.’⁷⁷ Christian responsibility, therefore, was not demonstrated through a redistributive state, but via three separate spheres: the family, community and nation.⁷⁸ Denouncing the concept of collective altruism as a delegation of responsibility and a manufacturing of false guilt, Mrs Thatcher reaffirmed in 1981, the individualist precept of the Biblical message: ‘We are called on to repent our own sins, not each others’ sins’.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Iain MacLeod Memorial Lecture, 1977, reprinted in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.66.

⁷⁵ Raban, *God, Man and Mrs Thatcher*, p.35.

⁷⁶ Iain MacLeod Memorial Lecture, 1977, reprinted in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.62.

⁷⁷ Margaret Thatcher, ‘The Spirit of the Nation’, 1981.

⁷⁸ Iain MacLeod Memorial Lecture, 1977, reprinted in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.63; Smith, *‘Margaret Thatcher’s Christian Faith*, p.244.

⁷⁹ Margaret Thatcher, ‘The Spirit of the Nation’ 1981.

Liberty

It was not simply that the Christian faith operated as a call to individuals, but that God had also bestowed on man free choice between eternal salvation or damnation. Liberty, therefore, was deemed to be at the heart of the Christian message.⁸⁰ As Mrs Thatcher explained in an interview with David Frost in 1988: ‘if he (man) did not have the fundamental choice, well he would not be Man made in the image of God’. She concluded, therefore, that a restriction of choice dehumanized man: ‘If God could interfere and change everything, then we should not be human beings with this God-given right to choose.’⁸¹ That same year, in her address to the Church of Scotland, Mrs Thatcher told the story of the crucifixion as essentially one of choice rather than sacrifice: ‘when faced with His terrible choice and lonely vigil, [he] chose to lay down His life that our sins may be forgiven.’⁸² This theological interpretation prompted Jonathan Raban to accuse the Prime Minister of mindlessly appropriating theology for partisan means: ‘Christ dying on the Cross joins those folk who have exercised their right to choose – to buy their own council houses, to send their children to private schools, to occupy ‘paybeds’ in NHS-funded hospitals.’⁸³ In some respects, Raban was right, for Mrs Thatcher was not simply using religion for rhetorical ornamentation, but was consciously seeking to link God-given liberty to a distinctly Thatcherite notion of political freedom. Yet Raban was wrong to label this as crass theology, for the application of divine free will in the political realm had roots dating back to the nineteenth century and was a legitimate understanding which the Prime Minister shared with many in her party and in the pews. Anglican John Gummer had put forward precisely this view in his chapter to Christian voters in 1987: ‘Choice lies at the heart of the Christian revelation’ judging that ‘there is something wrong in believing a man fit to choose his eternal destiny but not to decide on the education of his children.’⁸⁴ Such sentiments clearly resonated with many Christians. In a response to the Bishop of Manchester’s attack on private healthcare in 1981, one layman wrote to remind the prelate that it was right that political choices should operate

⁸⁰ Mrs Thatcher commented on her concept of liberalism: ‘The kind of Conservatism which he (Keith Joseph) and I – though coming from very different backgrounds – favoured would be best described as ‘liberal’, in the old-fashioned sense. And I meant the liberalism of Mr Gladstone, not of the latter-day collectivists. That is to say, we placed far greater confidence in individuals, families, businesses and neighbourhoods than in the state’: The Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture, 11 January 1996 in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.574.

⁸¹ Interview for TV-AM, 30 December 1988, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107022>, (accessed 12/05/10).

⁸² Margaret Thatcher, Church of Scotland speech, 1988, reprinted in Raban, *God, Man and Mrs Thatcher*, p.10.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁸⁴ Gummer, Heffer & Beith, *Faith in Politics*, p.9.

in the same way as religious liberty: 'haven't we all been given free will?... Our way to God is free for us, we choose what prayers suit us best, we also choose the Churches that we wish to worship in.'⁸⁵ One meeting at Chequers between the Anglican bishops and Margaret Thatcher in 1987 (later recounted by Bishop Jenkins in his memoirs) demonstrates the wide doctrinal differences between the Church and the government on this point:

The highlight of the meeting came when she was telling us how disappointed she was that we bishops did not seem to appreciate that her motivation stemmed from Christianity. Both Christianity and liberal market democracy, she stated, "were about freedom". At this point the evangelical Bishop of Chester, Michael Baughen, gently corrected her in his grandfatherly way: "oh no, Prime Minister. Christianity is not about freedom, it is about love." Far from demolishing her, this comment scarcely interrupted her flow.⁸⁶

This 'theological handbagging' from Mrs Thatcher serves as a useful illustration of the theo-political divide between the bishops and the Prime Minister and her resolute belief that free-market economics had Scriptural authority.

Mrs Thatcher conceptualised liberty as beyond politics, belonging to the religious-moral sphere and as a supreme indisputable doctrine. Yet it is clear that there her concept of freedom was a restricted and highly politicised one. There was never any hint that the state could be an instrument of liberty or could extend the freedom of its citizens. At a speech at the Carlton Club in 1984, for example, Mrs Thatcher rejected an understanding that liberty could be engineered by government or achieved through collective struggle, declaring simply that freedom and individualism were 'God-given, not state-given.'⁸⁷ Liberty increasingly came to be the slogan of Thatcherism; the justification for Conservative domestic policies such as rising property ownership, restriction on union practises and the deregulation of the market as well as the rhetorical cloak Mrs Thatcher would adorn every time she ventured out onto the international stage. Addressing the party-faithful at the Conservative conference in 1989, for example, Mrs Thatcher proclaimed:

At the heart of our belief is the principle of freedom under the rule of law. Freedom that gives a man room to breathe, to take responsibility, to make his own decisions and to chart his own course. Remove man's

⁸⁵ MCL, BCP, Z Files, Section 8, Medicine and Health file, letter from parishioner, (name withheld), 17 February 1981.

⁸⁶ Jenkins, *Calling of the Cuckoo*, p.133.

⁸⁷ 2nd Carlton Lecture, Carlton Club, 26 November 1984, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.233.

freedom and you dwarf the individual, you devalue his conscience and you demoralise him.⁸⁸

What Mrs Thatcher labelled as ‘the freeing of the human spirit’ was clearly a specific and highly contestable notion of political liberty, yet it was also one, which she legitimised by routinely drawing on religious doctrine.⁸⁹

The Doctrine of Original Sin

As has been explained in the previous chapter, the doctrine of original sin had been advanced by the New Right as a way of countering socialist utopianism and reinforcing the value of individual responsibility over structural solutions. Commenting on the initial drafts of Mrs Thatcher’s sermon for St Lawrence Jewry, Anglican Simon Webley encouraged Mrs Thatcher to adopt this position on the ‘Biblical view of man’ explaining: ‘It is about inherent selfishness or sinfulness. It is about Original Sin’ for ‘the evils of society are not due to the accident of class, education, income or region but to the inherent frailty of the individual himself.’⁹⁰ Mrs Thatcher took Webley’s advice and lecturing from the pulpit of St Lawrence Jewry proclaimed that Christianity teaches that ‘there is some evil in everyone and that it cannot be banished by sound policies and institutional reforms’ and denounced any political beliefs which advocated that ‘man is perfectable’ as ‘heresy’.⁹¹ Socialism she argued enslaved man, depriving him of his moral responsibility by seducing him with false hopes of a Promised Land whereas Conservatism, was naturally in tune with the religious and social reality of sin. In this, Mrs Thatcher was not blindly preaching the views of Simon Webley. These sentiments were all very familiar to her for it harked back to what her father had preached: ‘Men, nations, races, or any particular generation cannot be saved by ordinances, power, legislation’.

Original sin proved a convenient concept with which to debunk the myth of the state yet it was also deployed in respect to individual morality. Those on the Right – Mrs Thatcher included – frequently associated moral ‘permissiveness’ with socialism whether in respect to sexual education literature produced by Labour-run councils or by pointing out that the ‘new morality’ of the 1960s had been ushered in under a Labour administration. Underlying such accusations was an assumption that socialism, because it weakened

⁸⁸ Party Conference Speech, 13 October 1989, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.350.

⁸⁹ Speech to the Conservative Central Council, 21 March 1987, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.278.

⁹⁰ CCA, THCR 2/6/1/177, Simon Webley, ‘Themes for a speech on the restoration of Christianity and Christian values in British society’, p.3.

⁹¹ ‘I Believe’ St Lawrence of Jewry Speech, 1978 reprinted in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.73, p.75.

individual responsibility, encouraged a morally defunct and irresponsible citizenry, creating a society where men renounced their traditional responsibilities as fathers and where the single mother embodied the dependent amoral citizen. It was only through a reassertion of liberty, Mrs Thatcher explained, that moral responsibility could be restored; ‘without choice, talk of morality is an idle and an empty thing,’ she told the party conference in 1986.⁹² As has already been explained, this was a somewhat restrictive version of liberty, yet it was also a highly contradictory message. For while Mrs Thatcher advocated greater individual freedom, she also denounced social liberalism (i.e. choice in the moral sphere) for giving rise to immoral behaviour. On one level, Mrs Thatcher argued that citizens in order to exercise their moral faculties needed to be free from state interference, yet on another level, Mrs Thatcher had a fixed and conservative idea of which moral paths citizens should choose. This pointed to an overwhelming contradiction between the two strands of Thatcherism: liberty and social conservatism. This tension was blatantly exposed by Mrs Thatcher’s relations with the moral conservative movement whose demands for greater state regulation of morality were to be largely unfulfilled. Journalist Melanie Phillips observed that on the subject of morality, Mrs Thatcher was ‘trapped between her belief that individuals must be free to make their own choices and her equal belief that she must do something about it when those choices are in her view wrong’. Phillips rightly surmised that when it came to a choice between liberty and social conservatism, in the end the Thatcherite doctrine of freedom reigned supreme, for ‘the mother of the nation washes her hands of any responsibility.’⁹³

A Christian Nation

Margaret Thatcher liked to claim that the theo-political values outlined above were not simply personal or political beliefs, but were the essential ingredients of the nation’s spiritual identity, deeply rooted in the country’s history and culture.⁹⁴ In her St Lawrence Jewry sermon, ‘The Spirit of the Nation’, Margaret Thatcher, for example, drew heavily on this discourse of spiritual nationalism, pointing to how Britain, as nation ‘founded on Biblical principles’ had historically integrated Scriptural teachings such as ‘the acknowledgement of the Almighty, a sense of tolerance, an acknowledgement of moral

⁹² Party Conference Speech, 10 October 1986, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.260.

⁹³ ‘The Stressful State of Family Life’, *Guardian*, 12 October 1990.

⁹⁴ It is worth pointing out here that as far as the author is aware Thatcher kept religion out of her dealings with Northern Ireland.

absolutes and a positive view of work', into its legal code and culture.⁹⁵ Mrs Thatcher, however, was at pains to point out that the nation was in danger of loosing its Christian ethos and, in a rousing plea, called for the reinvigoration of the 'spirit of the nation.' 'Each generation must renew its spiritual assets if the integrity of the nation is to be survive' she warned the congregation.⁹⁶ In this instance, Mrs Thatcher linked Britain's Christian *survival* with its economic and moral *survival*, implying that a religious *revival*, like a political *revival*, was only possible under her direction. The fate of the nation's Christian heritage, it seems, was in the hands of Mrs Thatcher who was determined to set the country back on its providential path.

To some extent, this was familiar territory for the Conservative party. Stanley Baldwin had also interlinked Conservatism, Protestantism and national identity in his 'fireside chat' broadcasts during the interwar years for example.⁹⁷ Yet while Baldwin could rightly assume that the nation to which he referred was Christian (if not Protestant), Margaret Thatcher enjoyed no such luxury. Could it be that the Prime Minister was as guilty as the Church of England in presupposing that Britain remained a Christian country in the 1980s?

Mrs Thatcher always articulated the nation as a spiritual community united in a common Christian heritage rather than a populace united in faith. This was an implicit recognition of the decline in Christian worship, but also a conviction that Christianity remained central to the nation's heritage and continued to frame its political and moral values. This points to the way in which Mrs Thatcher (and the New Right) tended to frame the preservation of Christianity in Britain as a cultural rather than an explicitly evangelical issue. Secularism was conceived as a threat to values and tradition rather than faith per se while issues concerning the prevalence of Christianity in society were defended on the grounds of cultural conservation. A Christian-centric Religious Education syllabus in schools became a statutory requirement in 1988 in order to protect the nation's religious heritage rather than as a form of evangelisation; restrictive Sunday trading was preserved in 1986 out of a desire to maintain the 'traditional English Sunday' rather than weekly worship; and the Christian Blasphemy Act was kept not because it was believed to be necessary, but because it was felt that removing it would undermine the Christian foundations of British law. What can be termed here as the 'heritage' argument, amounted

⁹⁵ Margaret Thatcher, 'The Spirit of the Nation', 1981.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Phillip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), ch.9.

to a post-modern, post-secular preservation of religion, one which tacitly recognised its decline as a belief-system, but reflected a desire to sustain this tradition in a secular plural country. This cause was as much about national identity and maintaining conservative cultural traditions from encroaching modernity as it was about defending the Word of God.⁹⁸ Mrs Thatcher's and the New Right's repeated evocation of Britain's Christian identity therefore chiefly reflected the cultural concerns of conservatism in a secular plural modern age. Conservatives may have been appealing to tradition, but it was wholly in reaction to contemporary challenges.

Ironically, Mrs Thatcher's concept of the religious nation was not so dissimilar from that being propagated by Anglican leaders in this period. Even though their political message was different, both the Church and Mrs Thatcher spoke of the nation in Christianised terms and both drew on the idea of a diffusive Christianity amongst a non-churchgoing public. The dialogue between the Church and state, therefore, was entirely predicated on this shared understanding and was thus both reflective of the widely held fears about the disintegration and fragmentation of Englishness.⁹⁹ Mrs Thatcher's 'Spirit of the Nation' speech then, was not so different from David Sheppard's Dibleby Lecture, for both anointed their separate political visions with Scriptural authority and both forewarned that a failure to follow their specified course would result in the further secularisation of the nation.

The debate over the legal regulations on religious education to be included in the 1988 Education Act is a case in point. The campaign for a Christian-based curriculum by those on the right had very little to do with the realities of the classroom but chiefly concerned the politics of national identity. RE became the battleground on which the fate of British Christianity supposedly hinged, with Anglican traditionalists, the Conservative government and peers (led by cross-bencher Baroness Cox), all agreed that in an era when children were unlikely to receive religious instruction in either the home or parish, it was vital that the next generation received this instruction at school. Progressive education had always been a particular bugbear for the New Right, and in respect to RE, the specific complaint was that a secular multicultural curriculum – one which equated all religions and included the teaching of non-theistic ideas such as humanism and communism – had infiltrated the nation's classrooms. As Baroness Cox put it, under current circumstances,

⁹⁸ Alan D. Gilbert recognised that the same defence was used in the preservation of church buildings: Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain*, p.xi-ii.

⁹⁹ See chapter 2 of this thesis for a greater elucidation of this theme.

Britain was in danger of selling its 'spiritual birthright for a mess of secular pottage.'¹⁰⁰ Cox and her followers thus advocated a Christian-centric curriculum, one, which included a traditional understanding of the Christian faith and emphasised morality and individual responsibility. Delivering her sermon in Edinburgh in 1988, as the Act was proceeding through Parliament, Margaret Thatcher pledged her support for Cox's position, affirming that the nation's youth needed to be taught about 'the part which the Judaic-Christian tradition has played in moulding our laws, manners, and institutions' so that this heritage could be 'preserved and fostered.'¹⁰¹

The Church, because of its role as educational providers and as the spiritual voice of the nation, was naturally involved in discussions surrounding the drafting of the Bill.¹⁰² Led by the head of its Board of Education, the Bishop of London, the Anglican position was more accommodating than that of Cox and her followers, aiming for consensus across all faith groups while also ensuring a privileged place for Christianity on the curriculum. This conciliatory approach roused objections from Anglican traditionalists, who forwarded a resolution in the Synod calling for the syllabus to be entirely devoted to Christianity. Within Westminster, criticisms on the Anglican line were also vocalised, with many accusing the Church of being willing to sell out its own faith in order to protect others. After much negotiation and debate, however, the Bishop of London eventually managed to achieve an agreement in the form of an amendment, which gained the support of the government, Baroness Cox and her followers and other faith groups. The following words in respect to RE teaching were inserted into the final Act:

Religious education should reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking into account the teaching and practises of other principle religions represented in Great Britain.

Similar wording was used in respect to the compulsory daily act of worship for schools and it was agreed that the specific syllabus content would be decided at local level between the council, the Church of England and other relevant faith communities in the area.¹⁰³ On the surface, the 1988 Act appeared to be attempt by Mrs Thatcher and the Christian right to instigate some sort of re-evangelicisation of the nation. This is certainly how the *Guardian*

¹⁰⁰ *The Crisis in Religious Education* (London, 1988), p.4.

¹⁰¹ Margaret Thatcher, Church of Scotland speech, 1988 reprinted in Raban, *God, Man and Mrs Thatcher*, p.16.

¹⁰² Dennis Norman, *Uncertain Trumpet, History of Education in CofE Schools* (London, 2001).

¹⁰³ Local syllabus conferences were to be compulsory whereas before they had been optional.

saw it, commenting that: 'a government which has done its best to ignore the problems of falling school rolls now appears set to try and halt falling church rolls.'¹⁰⁴ In fact, the 1988 stipulations were an attempt to certify the nation's Christian heritage on the statute book at a time of rising concern about the nation's spiritual identity.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the final stipulations were an illustration of the fact that the Church, government and the New Right shared a desire to reassert Britain's status as a Christian country. The saga, however, had revealed that the main obstacle to this was not secularism but the accommodation of other faiths, and was thus a sign of much bigger problems to come.¹⁰⁶

Judeo-Christian heritage

One notable feature of Mrs Thatcher's theological discourse was her persistent use of the term 'Judeo-Christian values.'¹⁰⁷ In theological terms, this was a recognition of the doctrinal unity between Judaism and Christianity shared through Old Testament law. Seen in a political light, however, it alluded to Mrs Thatcher's own personal respect and affiliation with Judaism. Many commentators have remarked on the Prime Minister's favourable relationship with the Jewish community. Indeed, as MP for Finchley, a constituency with a large Jewish population, she could hardly have been otherwise.¹⁰⁸ These ties, however, went beyond mere political expediency. As Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher would frequently proclaim her respect for the Jewish community's emphasis on self-reliance and hard work, citing a genuine correlation between Nonconformist and Jewish values.¹⁰⁹ According to Hugo Young, the high proportion of Jewish members amongst MPs and in cabinet (which by 1987 had outnumbered the more traditionally welcoming Labour party) was illustrative of the fact that Judaism had found a new home on the right in British politics.¹¹⁰ Nowhere was this more evident than in Mrs Thatcher's relationship with the Chief Rabbi, Immanuel Jakobovitz. In 1986, Jakobovitz, in response to *Faith in the City*, issued a 'Jewish' perspective on inner city poverty and the relationship between government and its citizens. Entitled

¹⁰⁴ *Guardian*, 3 September 1988.

¹⁰⁵ Peart-Binns, *Graham Leonard*, p.244-5.

¹⁰⁶ See the Epilogue of this thesis for a greater exploration of this theme.

¹⁰⁷ In her memoirs Mrs Thatcher stated that her 'whole political philosophy' was based on Judeo-Christian values and explained that the Old Testament ('history of the Law') could not be separated from the New Testament ('history of Mercy'): Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p.509-10.

¹⁰⁸ Mrs Thatcher had been founder and president of the Finchley branch of the Anglo-Israel Friendship Society and delivered many addresses in synagogues and Jewish Societies during her time as MP for the area.

¹⁰⁹ Mrs Thatcher related the position of Jews as outsiders in British society to her own alienation from the British Establishment – although Mrs Thatcher always emphasised this as a strength, rather than a weakness.

¹¹⁰ Butler & Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1987* (Basingstoke, 1987), p.199.

From Doom to Hope, this pamphlet amounted to a spiritual and theological defence of small statism and individual responsibility. In words that could have been uttered by Mrs Thatcher herself, the Chief Rabbi claimed that ‘cheap labour’ was ‘more dignified than a free dole’ and that community responsibility was more valuable and worthwhile than collective altruism and state aid.¹¹¹ Judging that social transformation lay ‘within the heart of man’, the Rabbi praised hard work and the acquisition of wealth while at the same time lambasted the unions and dependency culture.¹¹² The Rabbi’s contribution was enthusiastically welcomed by Mrs Thatcher, who quickly granted him a peerage, no doubt in the hope that he would prove an effective counter point to the Anglican bishops in the House of Lords. Speaking at an occasion marking Jakobovitz’s retirement in 1991, Mrs Thatcher heaped praise on a man whose twenty-four years of leadership had been marked by ‘unyielding commitment to principle, a refusal to seek easy popularity at the expense of integrity and a fearless statement of values symbolised not just in the life of the Jewish people but of lasting relevance and general application to the modern world.’¹¹³ Mrs Thatcher never lavished such praise on any of her Anglican bishops, for it was in the Chief Rabbi that she had found her spiritual soul mate.¹¹⁴

Towards the end of the 1980s, with Islam increasingly on the agenda both at home and abroad, Mrs Thatcher’s use of the term ‘Judeo-Christian’ acquired new meaning and currency. In an interview with *The Times* in 1988, a month after the controversial publication of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, Mrs Thatcher remarked that the Jewish and Christian faiths had a sense of personal responsibility evident in ‘the Old Testament and the New, which you do not get in the other religions.’¹¹⁵ However questionable this statement, the aim of distinguishing Judaism and Christianity above other faiths was clear. At the time, the Muslim opposition to the publication of Rushdie’s novel (even before the book burnings the following year) was considered to be an overreaction, an un-British response, which supposedly unmasked the illiberal and unsophisticated nature of Islam. Coming as it did at a time of growing public consciousness (and suspicion) of the Muslim faith, there is

¹¹¹ Immanuel Jakobovitz, *From Doom to Hope: a Jewish View on Faith in the City* (London, 1986), p.10.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹¹³ Speech at dinner to Lord Jakobovitz retirement, 21 February 1991, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108261> (accessed 24/04/10).

¹¹⁴ Writing in her memoirs, Mrs Thatcher expressed her wish that ‘Christian leaders would take a leaf out of the teaching’ of the Chief Rabbi and that Christians themselves ‘would take closer note of the Jewish emphasis on self-help and acceptance of personal responsibility’: Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p.510.

¹¹⁵ Interview for the *Times*, published 26 October 1988, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107018>, (accessed 24/03/10).

little doubt that Mrs Thatcher was referring to Islam in her comments.¹¹⁶ Those hearing Mrs Thatcher's Church of Scotland sermon the previous May had also detected that Islam assumed the place of the 'other' in the speech. According to Jonathan Raban, Islam was cast as a shadowy threat to Christian England while T.E. Utley, who had helped draft the speech, considered that Mrs Thatcher's explicit link between the nation and Christian values indirectly positioned Muslims as outsiders, for it hinted that 'culturally...a practicing Muslim from Pakistan who is (say) a second generation immigrant is not as wholly British in quite the same sense as a native Englishman.'¹¹⁷

The term 'Judeo-Christian values' also served as part of Mrs Thatcher's theological assault on progressive secular values. Mrs Thatcher liked to claim a religious ownership for those principles associated with the Enlightenment. Speaking in 1988, for example, the Prime Minister declared that the 'flowering of individuality, the concept of human rights, the tradition of unfettered thought, the rule of law and the idea of progress' had all flowed from the Old Testament.¹¹⁸ The implicit calculation was to divorce human rights and justice from their secular eighteenth century connections by emphasising their Scriptural roots. The French Revolution, in contrast, as Mrs Thatcher famously remarked in 1989 during the biennial celebrations in Paris, had not given birth to liberty, but merely 'resulted in a lot of headless bodies and a tyrant.'¹¹⁹

Atheistic Socialism and Socialist Christianity

The underlying purpose of Mrs Thatcher's public doctrine was to wrestle the moral mantle from socialism. This was done chiefly in two ways: firstly, by claiming the Christian basis of capitalism and secondly by labelling socialism as an atheistic creed devoid of any religious credibility. Margaret Thatcher did not mince her words on this subject; one time stating that 'the Promised Land' of communism 'turned out to be the Gulag', and on another occasion claiming that Marxist economic determinism was an 'out-right denial of the Christian

¹¹⁶ It is not until after her reign as Prime Minister when Mrs Thatcher acknowledged the equality of Abrahamic religions, however this was in reference to Israel rather than Britain: 'These lands are the home of three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but one God.' 14 March 1991, Speech to the Industrial League of Orange County, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108266>, (accessed 12/04/10).

¹¹⁷ T.E. Utley, 'Hidden dynamite in that Sermon', *The Times*, 27 May 1988, in Moore & Heffer (eds.), *A Tory Seer*, p.216; Raban, *God, Man and Mrs Thatcher*, p.54.

¹¹⁸ Speech to Friends of Hebrew University of Jerusalem dinner, 27 October 1988, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107361> (accessed, 23/09/08).

¹¹⁹ This was Mrs Thatcher's response at the G-7 meeting in Paris in 1989 when journalists had asked her opinion on the French Revolution.

faith.¹²⁰ The origins of socialism, as Mrs Thatcher liked to remind her Christian audiences, were atheistic with Marx describing religion as a form of false consciousness that oppressed the mass. And yet, it was not only this which made Marxism unchristian, but its rejection of individual freedom, as Mrs Thatcher made clear in her 1978 sermon: 'If you deny personal responsibility you are denying the religious basis of life – that's the difference between me and a Marxist. The values by which you and I live are not values given by the State.'¹²¹ On this occasion, Mrs Thatcher aimed to highlight the philosophical divide between Christianity and secular socialist ideology, yet there was hardly a Christian consensus on this point, as the Church of England hierarchy frequently reminded her. Nor was it evident that 'personal responsibility' was a shared characteristic between Christianity and Conservatism, for an equal case could be made (and was by liberation theologians) on the important ties between Marxism and Christianity.

Like her ideological comrade Ronald Reagan, Mrs Thatcher also deployed the armory of religious rhetoric in her crusade against international communism. As early as 1977, in a speech to the University of Zurich's economic society, Mrs Thatcher affirmed that socialism was contrary to the ethical and religious traditions of Western thought for it created a 'centralised economic system....which subjugates [man], directs him and denies him the right to free choice.'¹²² Ten years later, on her historic tour to Russia in 1987, Mrs Thatcher made a point of visiting Zagorsk, the seat of the Russian Orthodox Church, touring its medieval monastery and meeting with Orthodox Church leaders. During the trip, Mrs Thatcher publicly made reference to the persecution of the Orthodox Church under the Soviet regime, citing it as proof of the complete incompatibility between Christianity and an ideology that sought its extermination. In Mrs Thatcher's view, the new dawn of religious freedom in post-communist Russia was a sign that the moral and indeed, Christian argument had been won.

Three years later in autumn 1990, as the Iron Curtain was being ripped down across Europe, Mrs Thatcher used the occasion of her party conference speech to proclaim that the 'secular creed' of socialism had 'utterly failed' and that the moral sovereignty of capitalism reigned supreme: 'Ours is a creed which travels and endures. Its truths are written in the human heart. It is the faith which once more has given life to Britain and

¹²⁰ Conservative Central Council, 31 March 1990, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.381; Margaret Thatcher, 'The Moral basis of a Free Society', 16 May 1978, *Daily Telegraph*, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=103687>, (accessed 23/04/10).

¹²¹ 'The Thatcher Philosophy', *Catholic Herald*, 5 December 1978.

¹²² Speech to the Zurich Economic Society, 14 March 1977, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.53.

offers hope to the world.’¹²³ The victory of capitalism over communism was presented not as an economic or diplomatic success but as a moral victory. Capitalism was depicted as the natural state of societies, one which, both Britain and Western Europe had temporarily diverted from, but had returned to the right path once more. Such heightened discourse seemed to present the outcome of the Cold War as an act of Divine Providence, with Mrs Thatcher herself emerging as a victorious Christian warrior; a portrayal which her subsequent memoirs and lecture tour did much to cement.¹²⁴ Delivering a speech to the Polish Parliament in 1991, when she was out of office, Mrs Thatcher declared: ‘It is not just that capitalism works. It is not just that capitalism is morally right. What we have to recognize and proclaim with the most intense conviction is that capitalism works *because* it is morally right.’¹²⁵ Mrs Thatcher’s ideological war of words with Moscow lent an unwavering sense of purpose and Manichean coherence to her anti-socialist message, one, which she successfully transported back home. By presenting this as a strict dualism between communism and capitalism and in terms of a battle between good and evil, Mrs Thatcher effectively tarnished all socialist thought and action with the same brush; not least those views emanating from the Church of England.

In her 1978 sermon at St Lawrence Jewry Mrs Thatcher had chastised those who considered ‘socialism as a direct expression of the Sermon on the Mount’ and associated ‘virtue with collectivism’ for, in her opinion, it was ‘a grotesque distortion of politics’ and ‘worse still, it is a blasphemous trivialisation of religion.’¹²⁶ On this point, Mrs Thatcher had taken the advice of T.E. Utley, who had initially suggested that the ‘purpose’ of the speech should address ‘the identification now being widely made between “the Christian ethic” and all forms of egalitarianism.’¹²⁷ Simon Webley, in agreement, had argued that in the postwar years ‘the Christian ideal of love for one’s neighbour’ had transformed into ‘a sort of humanistic socialism’ that needed to be publicly countered.¹²⁸ The aim of the speech therefore, should be to challenge not only the presumed moral superiority of socialism, but also specifically Christians who proselytised such ideas. Mrs Thatcher dutifully did this,

¹²³ Party Conference Speech, 12 October 1990, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.442.

¹²⁴ Margaret Thatcher, *Downing Street Years and Reason and Religion: the Moral Foundations of Freedom* (London, 1996); Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*, ch.6.

¹²⁵ Address to the Senate of the Polish Republic, Warsaw, 3 October 1991, in Harris (ed.), *Collected Speeches*, p.509.

¹²⁶ Margaret Thatcher, St Lawrence Jewry, ‘I Believe’ 30 March 1978 in Harris (ed.), *The Collected Speeches*, p.73.

¹²⁷ CCA, THCR 2/6/1/177, Speech at St Lawrence Jewry ‘I Believe’, comments on a draft speech by T.E. Utley, 24 February 1978.

¹²⁸ CCR, THCR 2/6/1/177, Simon Webley, ‘Themes for a speech on the restoration of Christianity and Christian values in British society’, p.3.

questioning whether Christian socialists ‘should stop and ask if their zeal has not somehow led them astray’.¹²⁹ The implication was that any cross-fertilization between socialism and Christianity not only polluted the Christian message, but ultimately stemmed from political rather than spiritual motivations. Mrs Thatcher returned to this subject three years later in 1981, this time hinting at the political divisions emerging within Christianity and warning of the potential dangers of Church leaders ‘descending into the political arena to take sides on those practical issues over which many good and honest Christians sincerely disagree. This surely can only weaken the influence and independence of the Church.’¹³⁰ Of course, Mrs Thatcher may have dismissed Christian socialism as a politicisation of the Word, yet, as we have seen, she was equally guilty in appropriating Christian doctrine for political means.

As the Church leaders increasingly spoke out against her government, so Mrs Thatcher directly attempted to strip their analysis of any spiritual credibility. In particular, she sought to undermine any inference that the welfare state could be accorded religious status. In her words, it was an irreligious intrusion, which should not appear ‘in the guise of an extravagant good fairy at every christening, a loquacious and tedious companion at every stage of life’s journey, the unknown mourner at every funeral.’¹³¹ In a radio interview with Jimmy Young in 1987 while on the election trail, Mrs Thatcher was even more unequivocal, labelling any plea for progressive taxation as ‘immoral’ and asserting that the ‘right to choose’ was the ‘essence of Christianity.’¹³²

Her speech to the Church of Scotland in 1988 revealed Mrs Thatcher at her most bold and blatant and, even though the audience was made up of Scottish ministers, there was little doubt that her message was also directed to the Church of England prelates. Mrs Thatcher began with the proclamation that ‘Christianity is about spiritual redemption, not social reform’, deliberately pitting her individualized concept of faith against the communal understanding of the Christian ethic. She followed this with a warning to Christians: ‘we must not profess the Christian faith and go to Church simply because we want social reforms and benefits or a better standard of behaviour – but because we accept the sanctity of life, the responsibility that comes with freedom.’¹³³ In one full swoop, Mrs Thatcher had completely undermined the religious motivations and sincerity of social Christianity. The

¹²⁹ Margaret Thatcher, St Lawrence Jewry, ‘I Believe’ 30 March 1978 in Harris (ed.), *The Collected Speeches*, p.72.

¹³⁰ Margaret Thatcher, ‘Spirit of the Nation’, 1981.

¹³¹ Airey Neave Memorial Lecture, 3 March 1980, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=104318>, (accessed 10/05/10).

¹³² Radio Interview with Jimmy Young, 5 June 1987, reported in the *Independent* <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106645>, (accessed 12/05/10).

¹³³ Margaret Thatcher, Church of Scotland Speech, reprinted in Raban, *God, Man and Mrs Thatcher*, p.11.

Prime Minister then addressed the charge of the immorality of wealth creation and materialism by drawing on the words of St Paul ('If a man will not work he shall not eat') as proof that 'abundance rather than poverty' had Biblical legitimacy.¹³⁴ This scriptural rationale for enterprise culture also conveniently served to counter the Anglican mantra 'bias to the poor'. Finally, the Prime Minister ended her speech by setting out the separate responsibilities of politicians and religious leaders: 'We parliamentarians can legislate for the rule of the law. You the Church can teach the life of the faith.'¹³⁵ In this, Mrs Thatcher was addressing one of the main concerns of Anglican traditionalists; that the church leadership was prioritizing social issues over evangelism. Soon after the speech, the BSR issued an open letter, dutifully thanking Mrs Thatcher for giving 'time and thought to matters of Christian faith'.¹³⁶ It then proceeded to reject the speech in its entirety, challenging the Prime Minister on her understanding of the Christian ethos of mutuality, her failure to acknowledge the indignity of charity and her lack of appreciation for the responsibilities of government. Seen side-by-side these two documents perfectly illustrate the theological and political divide between the Church and state in this decade.

The 'Thatcherite theology', as has been dissected here, was rooted in a belief in liberty and an individualized faith as the basis of the Revelation. It was however, doctrinally inconsistent and patchy, and despite her claims to the contrary, it was unashamedly a politicized interpretation of Christian doctrine. It merged theology with the secular language of ethics and philosophy and directly drew upon the evangelical and traditionalist movement within Christianity. It contained much of the theo-political instruction that Mrs Thatcher had been exposed to as a child, but reinvented for the politics of late-twentieth century Britain. Moreover, the aim of all this was twofold: firstly, to undermine the assumed association between socialism and Christianity and secondly, to revive nineteenth century ideas about the moral and Christian virtues of capitalism. This was a personal conviction which ran consistently throughout her premiership and could be traced back to her early days as Conservative party leader, as the notable 'convert' on the right, journalist Paul Johnson, commented in 1978:

She is the first proper Christian as a political leader that we've had in a very long time!...She is what you might call an orthodox Christian in the sense that she accepts the teachings of her church and is not a kind of subversive, trendy revolutionary element in it. She *does* believe in the ten

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.12.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.19.

¹³⁶ LPL, BSRP, SPC 1988, An open letter to Mrs Thatcher, 27 May 1988.

commandments. She *does* make very clear distinctions in her mind between what is morally right and wrong...one of the points she continually makes, and is gradually getting across, is that it used to be thought that the Labour party had morals on its side, that it somehow had a respect for equality, justice and moral goodness which the Conservatives, the party of capital, didn't possess, but that now the pendulum has swung the other way.¹³⁷

As the triumph of capitalism over communism was assured, so Mrs Thatcher spoke in even more confident tone of the moral validity of her politics. And yet, subsequent events would suggest that Mrs Thatcher ultimately failed in her aim to quash the moral credibility of socialism and revive the reputation of capitalism. In the 1990s, as the stark realities of globalization were exposed, this triggered an even greater chorus of protest against capitalism, not just from Christians, but also from a much more powerful and ethically inspired-NGO movement. The Conservative party meanwhile remained burdened by the legacy of the Thatcher years, characterized in the public mind as the 'nasty party', which led them to suffer three subsequent election defeats. At the same time, socialism in Britain, under the reformed guise of New Labour, successfully shed its radical associations and re-embraced its ethical socialist tradition, which strengthened rather than the weakened the moral credibility of the left. It would thus take more than a few sermons by Mrs Thatcher to imprint the moral virtues of capital into the public mind. Even if capitalism was considered necessary, it was deemed a necessary evil rather than a virtuous one. Mrs Thatcher may have created a nation of Thatcherites, but few truly believed that it was a morally righteous lifestyle. Given this then, how can we assess the impact and significance of Mrs Thatcher's public doctrine? It is to this subject, to which this chapter now turns.

IV. Audience and Reception: Assessing Mrs Thatcher's Public Doctrine

Commenting on Mrs Thatcher's St Lawrence Jewry speech in 1978, Maurice Cowling remained unconvinced of the effectiveness or even the rationale behind Margaret Thatcher's partisan theology. Arguing that the Christian case for Conservatism could equally be made for socialism, Cowling considered that, although such protestations may provide 'political encouragement to Christians who happen to be Conservatives', Mrs Thatcher's speech was somewhat naïve given that the nation was now largely indifferent to Christianity.¹³⁸ Cowling was right, there was no substantial electoral advantage to be gained from making appeals to Christians. Christian Conservatives, although an important

¹³⁷ Quoted in Murray, *Margaret Thatcher*, p.77.

¹³⁸ Maurice Cowling, 'The Present Position' in Maurice Cowling (ed.), *Conservative Essays*, p.5.

constituency, did not have the power to swing elections, moreover Christian voters in Britain were on both sides of the political divide. America proved to be a contrasting example, where Ronald Reagan's Republican party was particularly adept at marshalling the support of the evangelical churches by making specific appeals to their moral conservative agenda. When Reagan drew upon Christian language and ideas, he was therefore appealing to an important and influential constituency in a way that Mrs Thatcher was not.¹³⁹

This is not to say that Mrs Thatcher's religious rhetoric completely fell on deaf ears for, as we have seen, there were significant numbers of Christians (predominantly Conservatives) with whom her appeal found favour. Her marrying of politics, morality and faith resonated with the prevailing ethos of the conservative Anglican movement whilst her conflict with the liberal Anglican leadership merely confirmed the ideological harmony between political and religious conservatism in this period. Many people, it seemed, were also convinced of her Christian sincerity. One parishioner, for example, in a letter to the Bishop of Manchester admonished his Church for its 'unchristian denigration of Mrs Thatcher', who, he believed, carried out 'her great responsibilities with a genuine Christian faith.'¹⁴⁰ Even in the Methodist Church there were those who considered Mrs Thatcher as one of their own, with one pastor in a letter to the *Methodist Recorder* declaring that the Prime Minister preached Wesleyanism more truthfully and successfully than his own church.¹⁴¹ On a broader level, Mrs Thatcher's conscious revival of Nonconformist values did feed a certain yearning for a more decisive and resolute direction in the 1970s. Because of this, her doctrine was welcomed by a significant section of the populace, notably parts of the middle classes, who saw it as a necessary remedy for the social, economic and moral excesses of the postwar world. It could be said that Thatcherism satisfied a national thirst for a more prescriptive outlook at a time of uncertainty and change, which was also being quenched in the religious sphere with the blossoming of conservative evangelicalism.¹⁴² Moreover, this packaging of a political vision in Christianised terms by Mrs Thatcher and others on the right, suggests at the very least, that theological discourse remained a linguistic resource in

¹³⁹ Peele, 'Culture, Religion and Public Morality', pp.67-88. Specific studies of the Christian Right in the US include Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right* (Oxford, 1988); Clyde Wilcox, *God's Warriors: the New Christian Right in America* (Baltimore, 1992).

¹⁴⁰ MCL, BCP, Z Files, Section I Religion, Letters O' Valiant Hearts, Letter from parishioner (name withheld), 9 October 1989.

¹⁴¹ Letter from Rev. Ronald S. Rawlings, *Methodist Recorder*, 14 July 1988.

¹⁴² A point made in a different context by Paul Badham who has argued that 'despite the liberal belief that Christianity's hope lay in modernisation, much of the growth in Christianity was amongst "fundamentalist" churches and those strands who adhered to 'axiomatic' patterns of theological thought' and 'accept almost totally a very traditional understanding of Christian doctrine': Paul Badham, 'Religious Pluralism in Modern Britain', in Gilley & Sheils (eds.), *A History of Religion in Britain*, p.492. See Appendix I for statistics on the growth/decline of different denominations in this period.

British politics, even in more secular times. The New Right may have exaggerated the extent to which Britain remained a Christian nation, but for Mrs Thatcher's public doctrine to have any credibility or reverberation at all, there needed to be some level of residual faith and sympathy, even if this belief did operate at a tectonic level of British society.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall famously defined Thatcherism as a 'hegemonic project', a discourse, which 'interpreted and legitimated economic changes through a set of moral and ethical codes and latched anxieties about money, taxation and unemployment onto broader evocations of national loss and disintegration.'¹⁴³ In his view, authoritarian populism was central to its power for it translated economic theory into the language of aspiration, fear, moral virtue and common sense. Hall omitted religion (separate from morality) from his analysis, yet these last two chapters on the role of the New Right and the Thatcherite theology suggest that Christianity was a key part of the British neo-Conservative movement, as a motivation and in shaping the tone, language and ideological direction of the 'Conservative turn'. This chapter has revealed how Christianity – specifically Protestant-capitalist values – proved to be one of the central tools Margaret Thatcher used to legitimise her political vision. This was a theology which mixed economic self-interest with man's individual relationship with God, connected an evangelical moralism with illusions to the Victorian past, associated fears about national unity with the loss of Christian heritage and presented Thatcherism as the true political route to economic and moral redemption. Regardless of whether Thatcherism constituted a hegemony or not, it is clear that Christianity was an important element in the neo-Conservative discursive armoury and moreover, one which needed a degree of religious literacy on the part of the public in order to operate.

Yet this aside, there does remain the fundamental issue of the predominantly secular audience. Surprisingly, Mrs Thatcher was always mindful about speaking on religious matters, mostly out a fear of alienating non-believers. Ronald Millar has recounted how Mrs Thatcher was initially reluctant to quote the prayer of St Francis of Assisi on the steps of Number Ten in 1979 as she thought it too controversial and preachy.¹⁴⁴ She remained wary of being seen to be politicising faith, although admittedly, this did not stop her from doing just that. Conscious of such criticisms, T.E.Utley, in a letter to her advisors in 1978, explained that in order to gauge public approval and side step any unnecessary controversy, Mrs Thatcher needed to speak from a personal rather than a political perspective:

¹⁴³ Hall, 'The Great Moving to the Right Show', p.28.

¹⁴⁴ Millar, *The View from the Wings*, p.284-5, p.267.

public interest would be captured by using some of this autobiographical material. This would also have the advantage of making her comments on theological matters read more like a personal testament. On the whole, for example it is not a good idea to have the Tory Party leader leaping in to theological controversy between the liberal and conservative wings of the Church unless she makes it perfectly clear that she is doing so in a private capacity.¹⁴⁵

To a certain extent Mrs Thatcher took Utley's advice; she did always speak from a personal perspective, it was just that her conviction style meant that she tended to present these as doctrinal absolutes. But this ability to merge the personal with the political was one of the key features of Mrs Thatcher's style of leadership. As Peter Clarke has correctly judged, 'Thatcherism without Thatcher is difficult to imagine', testifying to the centrality of her image to her authority and how Mrs Thatcher was the personal embodiment of precisely those values, prejudices and aspirations that she sought to instil within the nation.¹⁴⁶ As Heather Nunn and others have analysed, Mrs Thatcher's persona was crucial to her authority as leader, with the vision of the Iron Lady assuming an almost mythical-like status in British political consciousness.

It is here that Max Weber's theory on the nature of leadership might shed some light on the issue. According to Weber there are three types of authority: legal, traditional and charismatic authority. Under these definitions, Mrs Thatcher would be classified as a charismatic leader, which Weber stipulated as 'a certain quality of individual personality by which he is set apart and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.'¹⁴⁷ Expanding on Weber's analysis, Ann Ruth Willner has set out the key characteristics that constitute a charismatic ruler. These included: the importance of image, an individual from a lower social economic background (i.e. not from the established ruling elite), an inexhaustible vitality, great composure under stress and a determination and stubbornness combined with a revolutionary agenda.¹⁴⁸ Willner has argued that the projected image, however distant from reality, was absolutely fundamental to a leader's charismatic authority.

The figure of Margaret Thatcher certainly corresponds with this analysis, not only in origins and agenda, but also in the construction of her image as someone with super-

¹⁴⁵ CCA, THCR 2/6/1/177, Speech on St Lawrence Jewry, 'Speech at St Lawrence Jewry, comments by T E Utley', 24 February 1978.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Clarke, *A Question of Leadership: Gladstone to Thatcher* (London, 1992), p.314.

¹⁴⁷ Max Weber (trans. A. M. Henderson & Talcott Parsons), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (London, 1964), p.358.

¹⁴⁸ Ann Ruth Willner, *Charismatic Political Leadership: A Theory* (Princeton, 1968).

human-like capabilities. She was presented as a woman of great physical resilience who could exist on less than four hours of sleep; of strong mind, who was always better briefed, more informed and more decisive than any of her wobbling ‘wet’ ministers; as a warrior figure, who emerged unscathed from the ashes of the bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton and who successfully defeated the ‘enemies within’, such as Arthur Scargill, and threats beyond Britain’s shores such as General Galtieri.¹⁴⁹ In the construction of this image, the religious language and element was crucial. Mrs Thatcher’s public doctrine – her preacher-like tone, evangelical mission, her heightened revivalist language and Biblical vision – were absolutely fundamental in creating a religious aura and a providential air around her role and position as Prime Minister.¹⁵⁰

The political scientist Ivor Crewe, assessing the relationship between the public and Mrs Thatcher, has drawn upon opinion polls to conclude that there is little evidence that the British electorate had become ‘suffused with Thatcherite values on either the economic or moral plane’.¹⁵¹ Crewe attributed Mrs Thatcher’s electoral success not to her popularity but to the specific appeal of her charismatic authority; a presence, which proved particularly alluring at a time of weak parliamentary opposition. As Crewe explains: ‘Mrs Thatcher’s warrior style – setting objectives, leading from the front, confronting problems, holding her position – *did* make a major electoral impact.’¹⁵² This points to the real significance of Mrs Thatcher’s public doctrine. For if an overriding religious ethos and language was central to the image of Mrs Thatcher and if we are to be convinced by Crewe’s argument on the popular appeal of her charismatic authority, then we must conclude, therefore, that her public doctrine and preacher-like persona was absolutely central to her legitimacy and success with the electorate. Even though the public were not predominantly active believers, it was the authority of Mrs Thatcher’s religious ethos, rather than the religious message itself, which was significant. Mrs Thatcher’s relationship with the British electorate has and always will be, a contestable issue; did Mrs Thatcher reflect the values of the public or reshape them? We will never know the thought-process of every voter at the ballot box

¹⁴⁹ Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*.

¹⁵⁰ According to Willner ‘charismatic leaders...rarely provoked indifference, neutrality, or generally mild reactions. Whatever may have been at the root of their affect, even their enemies have recognised it and feared it as something beyond the generality of human experience.’: Willner, *Charismatic Political Leadership*, p.7.

¹⁵¹ Ivor Crewe, ‘Has the Electorate become Thatcherite?’ in Robert Skidelsky (ed.), *Thatcherism* (London, 1988), p.41. There has been much debate on why Mrs Thatcher was successful with the British electorate. Many cite changing mobility, the decline of traditional Labour working class support base and the fact that Mrs Thatcher’s hold on power centred around a small geographical area, predominantly in the South of England: Andrew Adonis, ‘The Transformation of the Conservative Party in the 1980s’ in Adonis & Hames (eds.), *A Conservative Revolution?*, pp.145-67.

¹⁵² Ivor Crewe, ‘Has the Electorate become Thatcherite?’, p.45.

and so while we can only allude to the possible influence that Mrs Thatcher's religious authority had in determining votes, we can speak in more assured terms about the direction that this religious authority took once Mrs Thatcher was in power. Part reality, part construction, Mrs Thatcher's priestly moralising drew inspiration from the example of her father, assumed both a muscular Christianity and a feminine piety, tapped into a Nonconformist heritage and contemporary paranoia about secularism and reflected a desire for certainty in an age of doubt. Seen in this light then, perhaps Mrs Thatcher's use of the prayer of St Francis of Assisi on the steps of Number 10 in 1979, no longer seems so out of step with her style and approach to leadership: 'Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may we bring truth. Where there is doubt, may we bring faith. And where there is despair, may we bring hope.'

CHAPTER VII: EPILOGUE

The Death of Protestant England and the Birth of Multi-Faith Britain: the 1990s

'A Society has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else'

T.S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture*, 1940¹

The dialogue between the Church and the Conservative government in the 1980s was predicated on a shared understanding that Christian values continued to underscore the nation's politics, even if these two positions were diametrically opposed. Those on the right sought to fuse their ideology with a moral legitimacy, by reasserting the doctrinal harmony between Christian and capitalist values and affirming the nation's Christian heritage. The Anglican position, on the other hand, linked a diffusive Christianity with a reaffirmation of the Biblical basis of statutory welfare, stressing national unity and the altruistic relationship between the classes. The new decade would see a series of events and developments, which would eventually render both these positions untenable and this conflict largely irrelevant, as the ruling elite was forced to recognise the multi-faith nature of British society.

The aim here is not to trace this transition in its entirety, which is beyond the bounds of this thesis, but rather to show how three main developments meant that the conflict between the Church of England and the Conservative government dissipated and was eventually replaced with a new configuration of the relationship between religion and politics in Britain. Firstly, this epilogue shall trace the decline of public Anglicanism, which had characterised the Church's prophetic ministry in the 1980s. The subsequent decade would see the Church of England become consumed with its own internal divisions and its leadership less inclined to assert their presence on the national stage. The second theme will be the death of Tory-Anglicanism. As this thesis has argued, Conservative disaffection with the Church of England had been growing steadily since the 1970s, however, it was to be the passing of the Ordination of Women Measure by the Synod in 1992, which marked the symbolic end of the historic relationship between Church and party. Finally, it shall examine *The Satanic Verses* controversy and the problems and questions that this furore triggered. This event was a monumental turning point in the religious history of the nation for it raised the central issue of the rights of Britain's religious minorities, which, in turn, prompted a reordering of Britain's national religious identity and changed the role and position of religion in British politics accordingly.

¹ T.S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (New York, 2nd edition, 1949), p.10.

I. The Death of Public Anglicanism

If Archbishop Runcie's reign was characterised by a revival of public Anglicanism and his Church's conflict with the Thatcher government, then his successor's time in office was characterised by a more internalised perspective and a retreat from the political stage. In the 1990s, the BSR was notably more muted, the Synod became increasingly embroiled in ecclesiastical affairs and even the new generation of bishops seemed unwilling to rock the political boat as their predecessors had done a decade earlier. *Faith in the City* had undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the Church at both a central and parish level, yet the two follow-up reports in the nineties were less penetrative and political and received little attention as a result.² More so, the Church Urban Fund, which had generated huge investment for urban ministry and social projects, drew back from pursuing its more political goals. By the early nineties, the CUF had generated over £18 million, yet only 21 per cent of affluent parishes and 18 per cent of urban parishes were still involved in the link-up programme, with many pointing to unbridgeable class and cultural differences as the key reasons for its lack of success.³ According to a report on the CUF published in 1994, the educational message of the Fund had not penetrated 'comfortable Britain' and had subsequently been replaced with a 'less contentious frame of reference' so as to ensure unequivocal support from the Church.⁴ In recent times, there has been ample evidence that congregations could still prove an effective political force in Britain, as demonstrated by the mobilisation of the Christian community in Jubilee 2000 and Make Poverty History campaigns, but tellingly, these were on matters of international rather than domestic concerns.

One chief reason why public Anglicanism, which had been such a prominent force on the political stage in the 1980s, more or less disappeared in the 1990s was that the economic debate had changed. The triumph of global capitalism after the collapse of the Cold War triggered a significant shift in thinking towards a more internationalist perspective. Christian social theology adapted accordingly, focusing more on the rights and

² *Living Faith in the City* (London, 1990); *Staying in the City: Faith in the City Ten Years On* (London, 1995).

³ G. Bowpitt, *The Clergy in the Local Community: a summary* (York, 1999), p.29.

⁴ Rob Farnell et al., *Hope in the City?* (Sheffield, 1994), p.143.

wrongs of globalisation and less on the domestic political agenda.⁵ The Church's own ethical investment policy, for example, became a key issue for Anglicans seeking to demonstrate good practice in what was now labelled 'corporate social responsibility' while there was even greater prominence given over to the developing world in this analysis. This change had its downsides though, for theologians and church leaders found it difficult to be heard in this widening and increasingly secularised sphere. This focus on the global rather than national scene also inevitably meant that Christian commentators tended not to stress the distinct role of the Church of England as the 'conscience of the nation', and instead made much more generalised claims about the distinctive insights that Christian ethics and theology could make on the universal debate about capitalism and wealth.

Of equal significance was the fact that the domestic political situation had also changed. The election of John Major triggered an immediate shift in the political milieu. Not only was his political style less confrontational than Mrs Thatcher, but the new Prime Minister also appeared committed to pursuing a 'compassionate Conservative' agenda, in his words, creating a 'nation at ease with itself'. Moreover, the reconfiguration of the Labour party under John Smith and subsequently Tony Blair signalled a realignment of British party politics and meant that the Church's function in occupying a centrist platform during the eighties was no longer necessary. The Thatcher years, it seems, had posed a unique political challenge. The Anglican hierarchy had entered the political fray in the 1980s to speak out against what they saw as a fundamental undermining of Christian values, yet surprisingly once Mrs Thatcher left office, the heat, tension, and along with it much of the motivation behind this public prophecy had diminished. Subsequent years under the Major and New Labour governments would in fact see the forging of a productive and fruitful partnership between the Church, Whitehall and local councils, as Christian charities and churches were increasingly seen as vital agencies for fostering social capital within communities. A story of conflict, it seems, was replaced with one of growing cooperation between Church and the state.⁶

Anglicanism under Archbishop Carey was also marked by a greater internalisation, as the Church directed its energies away from the public political stage into getting its own house in order. Part of the reason for this was practical. In a wicked twist of irony, the early

⁵ David Jenkins, *Market Whys and Human Wherefores* (London, 2000); Ronald H. Preston, *Religion and the Ambiguities of Capitalism* (London, 1991); David Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics* (London, 2003).

⁶ Helen Cameron, 'The British Government and the Inner Cities Religious Council' in Grace Davie, Linda Woodhead & Paul Heelas (eds.), *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular, and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot, 2003), pp.120-135; Mike Craven & Graeme Smith, *Party Games Christian Engagement in the Political Process* (London, 1998).

1990s saw the Church suffer huge financial losses on the stock market. This was primarily the fault of the Church Commissioners who had engaged in exactly the type of casino capitalism, which the Anglican leadership had spent so much time condemning. All of this cost the Church dear, wiping a reported £500 million off its assets and forcing Archbishop Carey to implement an urgent restructuring of its finances.⁷ Another consequence of this was that the Church became ever more reliant on contributions from its congregations, which inevitably forced its leadership to become more accountable to its loyal members.

The key issue that dominated the first years of George Carey's incumbency was the ordination of women priests. This was entirely an internal ecclesiastical affair one which aroused great passions within the Church, but generated little interest amongst the general public. The passing of the Measure has sufficiently been documented elsewhere; of relevance here is the way in which the debate preoccupied the Church and the ramifications of this for public Anglicanism.⁸ The campaign for the ordination of women had been gathering pace for over twenty years, yet it was in the 1980s, as the decision was coming to a head, that it emerged as the main bone of contention between traditionalists and liberals. Synod debates on the issue aroused some of the most heated discussions within the chamber in this decade and when it eventually passed in November 1992, the vote was met with a mixture of jubilation and despair by those within the Church.⁹ If the press reports were to be believed, the Church of England was seemingly on course for a schism not seen since the Reformation.

For traditionalist Anglicans the admittance of women into the priesthood fundamentally altered the identity of the Church of England. It undermined Anglican's place within Christendom and disrupted what Richard Hooker had originally deemed to be the doctrinal balance of Anglicanism among Scripture, Tradition and Reason. To a certain extent, the ordination of women debate was as much about the direction of the Church as it was about whether a female priesthood was in accordance with Biblical or canonical law. For some, the passing of the Measure was a sign that the traditionalist cause had been lost and they felt that they had no option but to leave the Church of England. Many looked to Rome as their new spiritual home with four bishops, 300 clergy and many laity converting

⁷ Terry Lovell, *No.1 Millbank: The Church of England's Financial Downfall* (London, 1997); George Carey, *Know The Truth* (London, 2004), ch.10.

⁸ Jonathan Petre, *By Sex Divided: The Church of England and Women Priests* (London, 1994); Ian Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England: Ten Years On* (Manchester, 2004); Christina Rees (ed.), *Voices of this Calling: Experiences of the First Generation of Women Priests* (Norwich, 2002).

⁹ The voting in the Synod was as follows: House of Bishops: 39 for/13 against; House of Clergy 176 for/74 against; House of Laity 169 for/82 against.

in the aftermath of the Synod's decision.¹⁰ In an effort to appease those that remained, the Church appointed a number of 'flying bishops' to administer those parishes unwilling to accept female priests. Admittedly, this settlement was not a solution nor did it make much logistical or theological sense, however, it did reflect a genuine desire on the part of the Anglican leadership to ease the Church through this change with the least possible pain. The establishment of the anglo-catholic organisation, Forward in Faith, and the conservative evangelical group, Reform, was testimony to the fact that the traditionalist cause had not completely been defeated by the ordination decision. The 1990s would see Anglican traditionalists soldiering on to new battles inevitably lurking on the horizon; female bishops and homosexual priests.¹¹

While Archbishop Carey concentrated on guiding the Church through this momentous and historic transformation, the view forwarded by the press and some Anglicans was that the Church had been irrevocably damaged by the ordination crisis. As we have seen, the media in the eighties had been crucial in according the Church its national status and platform, yet in the 1990s the predominant portrayal of the Church was that of a broken family, wrought with internal problems and seemingly unaware of the outside world which it was meant to serve. The passing of the ordination of women was undoubtedly newsworthy stuff – 'Vicars in Knickers' so the *Sun* headline ran – but perhaps for all the wrong reasons. It created the sense of a backward looking Church, barely able to get to grips with the modern world and immersed in an internal schism, which was tearing the Church apart. The following Easter in 1993, newspapers were dominated with stories of mass priestly conversions to Rome and Archbishop Carey's weakening authority, with the *Guardian* running the headline: 'Dr Carey 'In the Name of God, go!' - reporting an appeal from disaffected Anglicans.¹² The press were guilty of exaggerating this schism, nonetheless, it created the impression of a Church lost in a tumultuous sea of fragile leadership, doctrinal confusion and fractional dissent, with little sense of national purpose and presence.

In the 1980s the Church had confidently proclaimed itself as outward looking, in service to society and as the 'conscience of the nation', yet in the context of the female ordination issue, such claims appeared remarkably far-fetched. All the priestly moralising about consensus politics now seemed empty rhetoric at a time when consensus was far from being the prevailing mood within Anglicanism. As the Church became embroiled in

¹⁰ Petre, *By Sex Divided*, p.181.

¹¹ Michael Watts (ed.), *Through a Glass Darkly: A Crisis Considered* (Leominster, 1993); Jones, *Women and Priesthood*, ch.2.

¹² *Guardian*, 14 April 1993.

ecclesiastics, the aspiration and image of the Church of England, as set out in *Faith in the City*, became increasingly untenable. The fact that the public were completely distanced and disengaged from the debates about female ordination only reinforced this point. To broad sections of the non-churchgoing public, *Faith in the City* had at the very least showed the Church engaging and relating to the 'real world', yet in the 1990s, with sectarian interests dominating the agenda and the headlines, the Church appeared to be once again retreating behind its walls of piety.¹³ If the ordination of women, as traditionalists argued, robbed the Church of England of its right to be part of the Universal Catholic Church, then it perhaps also robbed it of any pretensions of being a national Church.

This crisis was coupled with a continual dwindling of its congregations. The 1990s had been designated the 'Decade of Evangelism', and with the evangelical Carey at the helm, the Church had sought to rediscover its missionary zeal and purpose. Despite some notable successes, such as the celebrity-endorsed Alpha course, these endeavours did not halt the decline in congregations and the decade saw a further drop of six per cent in weekly attendances.¹⁴ Reflecting on the fate of Anglicanism in the 1990s, historian Adrian Hastings has concluded that while the conflict over women priests endangered Anglicanism's 'confessional' identity, falling church rolls further undermined its 'national' identity, which together struck a significant blow to the role, purpose and authority of the established Church.¹⁵

As has been argued throughout this thesis, the established Church in the 1980s projected an image of the spiritual head of a nominally Christian nation. This was an idea that existed very much in the Anglican imagination, but one, which was readily endorsed by the media and the ruling elite. In the subsequent decade, as the Church were attracting headlines of a different sort, so it signalled that the concept of public Anglicanism no longer held sway both outside or within the Church. In historical terms, the 1980s signalled the last gasp of public Anglicanism. This was a concept, which had first emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, reached its high point under William Temple and was resuscitated once again in the 1980s. Its subsequent demise, however, revealed its insubstantial foundations and the fact that its premise in the 1980s had been more slogan than coherent principle, more imagined than real and was therefore ultimately unsustainable when challenged.

¹³ Allen Warren (ed.), *A Church For the Nation* (Leominster, 1992); Paul Avis, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (London, 1992).

¹⁴ Mark Garnett, *From Anger to Apathy. The British Experience since 1975* (London, 2007), p.184.

¹⁵ Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p.xliv.

II. The Death of Tory Anglicanism

Just as the ordination of women was an important moment for Anglican traditionalists, so it also posed a major dilemma for the Christian components of the New Right. As we have seen, the Thatcher years saw relations between the New Right and the liberal Anglican hierarchy become increasingly fractious with clear dividing lines emerging over politics, theology, morality and liturgy. In many respects, the disaffection with Anglicanism was to reach its crisis point over the Ordination of Women Measure, signalling the final end of the historic linkage between Toryism and Anglicanism.

This long-term development is clearly evident if we survey the passing of Church Measures in Parliament from the Worship and Doctrine Measure of 1974 to the ordination of women priests, twenty years later, in 1993. In 1974, opposition from Conservative MPs had been framed on the grounds that, as representatives of the party of Church interests, it was their duty to uphold the traditional spiritual responsibilities of Parliament, even against the Synod. Conservative MP John Stokes spoke for a number of his fellow Conservative MPs when he declared that his opposition was out of ‘passionate conviction’ and ‘as a member of a party which owes its very existence to defending Church and Monarch.’¹⁶ As we have seen, a small but significant cohort of Anglican Conservatives felt so strongly about the direction of Anglicanism in the 1980s that they used their parliamentary privilege to defeat Church Measures and attack the Church leadership. The debate on female ordination, however, roused no such opposition and instead reads like a lament for the passing of the historic alliance between Anglicanism and Toryism. Very few Conservative MP articulated a belief that the party and church were interlinked, whilst the response from the few Conservatives Anglicans in the chamber was one of disaffection and disappointment. Over all, the Tory benches seemed indifferent to the Measure, with many Conservative MPs, like their Labour and Liberal counterparts, commenting that it was a matter for the Church to decide and that Parliament was in no position to have much input on the Measure. This was in part reflective of a generational shift within the party, for the likes of Bernard Braine, Peter Bruinvels, Peter Mills, John Stokes, Ivor Stanbrook and Enoch Powell, who had led the Anglican Conservative faction since the 1970s, had all left Parliament by 1993 only to be replaced by a younger cohort of Conservative MPs for whom Anglicanism was not a key part of their political DNA. Tellingly, whereas Viscount

¹⁶ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 4 December 1974, Vol.882, col.1594.

Cranborne's bill in 1981 to protect the Prayer Book had amassed the support of 130 (mostly Conservative) MPs, only nineteen members voted against the Ordination of Women Measure.¹⁷

For the few remaining Conservative Anglicans, such as Ann Widdecome and John Gummer, the acceptance of women into the priesthood was merely the climax of a series of events which signalled the corrosive effect of liberal Anglicanism on the Church. During the Commons debate, Ann Widdecome spoke of her feelings of hurt and betrayal towards a Church to which she felt she could no longer belong. When asked by former Catholic Labour MP Clare Short why she felt so much bitterness, Widdecome replied:

I must say to the Hon. Lady that she is not hearing bitterness...It is utter grief and anger, which sometimes sounds like bitterness. It is utter disbelief at what has been going on, that we have not only managed to consecrate bishops who do not believe in the resurrection and the virgin birth, but that we cannot get our moral message across. Yes, I am very angry.¹⁸

For Widdecome, the Anglican leadership had shown itself to be completely consumed with the spirit of the age and on the specific issue of women priests, had completely capitulated to secular feminist thought. Widdecome eventually came to the conclusion that only the Roman Catholic Church had the authority, conviction and self-assurance to oppose the evils of the 'permissive' society.¹⁹ John Gummer, also spoke of his personal dismay during the parliamentary debate, arguing that the Measure compromised the comprehensiveness of Anglicanism by alienating traditionalist Anglicans and therefore undermined 'the whole basis of the Elizabethan settlement, which sought to create a Church of the nation in which everybody, except those who were at the extreme ends, could worship together.'²⁰ For Gummer, it represented a significant break with Anglican tradition from which there would be no turning back: 'when the Measure is passed we will be excluded from the Church of England and a great part of its way of presenting the gospel to England will be damaged.'²¹ Gummer subsequently resigned from the Synod and converted to Roman Catholicism.

¹⁷ The vote on the Church of England (Ordination of Women) Measure in the Commons was 195 Ayes/19 Noes. The 19 MPs that voted against the Measure comprised of Anglican Conservatives (over-two-thirds), three Ulster Unionists, and one Labour MP.

¹⁸ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 29 October 1993, Vol.230, col.1122.

¹⁹ Ann Widdecome, 'Foreword' in Dwight Longenecker (ed.), *The Path To Rome: Modern Journeys to the Catholic Church* (Bodmin, 1999), pp.xii-xvi.

²⁰ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 29 October 1993, Vol.230, col.1104.

²¹ *Ibid.*, col.1107.

Many among the Conservative intelligentsia, who had spent much of the 1980s criticising the Church leadership, also felt that the ordination decision meant that they could no longer remain within the Church of England. Charles Moore's explanation of his conversion to Roman Catholicism is worth quoting at length:

Over the past ten years or so it became ever clearer to me that the Church of England was deep in the thicket. Its traditional *via media* had degenerated from an intellectual position to mere weakness of mind. Its public moral stances seemed indistinguishable from those of a reasonably decent, mildly Left-wing agnostic. Its retreat into self-government and its attack on the parish system made it less national and more sectarian.I found that my gloom and irritation interfered with my worship. I felt as someone feels who has lived in the neighbourhood all his life, and notices it going downhill. There are small niggles – more noise, more satellite dishes, more litter, ruder neighbours. Then there are worse things – demolition of buildings he loves, the tearing up of a park, the closing of a library, the spread of crime. At first he is determined to stay. But eventually something snaps.²²

Moore's likened his detachment from Anglicanism to that of someone who no longer recognised the place in which he lived and felt compelled to move. This metaphor positioned Anglicanism as a disrupted and disordered community destroyed by modernity and constant change. Here Moore was linking the familiar themes of community, preservation and conservatism yet positioning modern Anglican as divergent from these core values. Moore's reflections hint at the way in which his renouncement of Anglicanism involved a significant breach of his identity: 'I feel rather like a man standing among packing cases and looking, for the last time, at the bare boards of his old home.'²³ For many Anglicans, converting to Roman Catholicism was not simply a switch of denomination, but involved a serious reshaping of their own understanding of what it meant to be a Conservative and English. Many Anglican converts to Rome admitted that they had initially been reluctant to adopt Catholicism precisely out of a fear that it would make them un-English.²⁴ Foreseeing the potential ramifications of becoming a Catholic as early as 1987, conservative journalist T.E. Utley had described this process in pretty bleak terms:

I shall have to become a ghetto Christian. This is a tragic thing for a man who is, not only by intellectual conviction but to the marrow of his being, an Anglican, one who loathes the idea of belonging to a sect

²² Charles Moore in Joanna Bogle (ed.), *Come On In, It's Awful* (Leominster, 1994), p.28.

²³ Moore, *Come On In*, p.32.

²⁴ See for example, Graham Leonard, 'By Whose Authority?' in *The Path To Rome*, pp.15-32.

which separates itself from English life and closes its mind to the changing fashions of English culture.²⁵

The conversion to Roman Catholicism required, as William Oddie explained, a fundamental transformation of ‘one’s entire historical consciousness’.²⁶ Englishness as well as Conservatism had been established on a specific reading of English history, one that was largely shaped around anti-Catholicism. How one viewed key episodes in England’s past, such as the Reformation and crucially, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, was central to Conservative identity. Becoming a Catholic, therefore, demanded a rewriting of this narrative, not least a shift from the side of victor to that of the oppressed in English history. In this way, converting to Rome posed a challenge not just to their religious outlook, but also their political and national identity. As Charles Moore saw it, however, it was about taking one’s national identity out of the equation and accepting that God was no longer an Englishman: ‘Even I could see that a religion which was *merely* English could not possibly have been what Christ intended.’²⁷ With the conversion of figures like Moore to Rome, so one of the remaining threads of English Protestant nationalism went with them.

These high-profile conversions naturally received much attention in the press and contributed to the prevailing sense of crisis within Anglicanism. More significantly, it signalled the decline of a particular Anglican-Conservative presence in British public life, which although, admittedly had been dwindling for some time, by the end of the 1990s had more or less completely dissipated. No longer was the Conservative cause uniquely bound to Anglicanism or necessarily Christianity, in the way that it had always been: Anglicanism, once the bastion of Conservatism and Englishness, ceased to be a core component of either. At the same time, however, the conversion of public figures such as Widdecome, Moore and Gummer also gave rise to a new era of respectability and prominence for Roman Catholicism, which had always had the position of suspicion and foreignness in English society. This was, therefore, a cultural and political development as much as a religious one.

While converts came from all shades of Anglicanism (most notably the anglo-catholic wing), they were united in their desire to hold the liberal Anglican hierarchy entirely responsible for the crisis. It was the Church leadership, they argued, which had forced the Church down the road of reform and change, leading it to renounce its heritage, abandon

²⁵ ‘The Drift towards a Secular Church’, *The Times*, 2 March 1987 in Moore & Heffer (eds.), *A Tory Seer*, p.206.

²⁶ William Oddie, *Come On In*, p.38.

²⁷ Moore, *Come On In*, p.26.

its fundamental beliefs and accommodate its ethos around secular fashions. As Anglican Conservative MP Robert Key explained in 1989, he felt detached from a modern politicised Church, which was betraying its history:

I am the first person to admit to being confused about where the Church is trying to go at present. I am confused in so many areas of life because my traditional education and upbringing have not only been challenged but positively blown apart. When I sit in Salisbury Cathedral on Sunday ...I look round at the tombs of crusaders and memorial tablets to 19th century missionaries...I cannot understand why the crusaders and the missionaries have been debunked by the current trendies of the Church leadership...the disrespectful way in which hundreds of years of English history are written off by the current interpretation from Church leaders leave me somewhat gasping.²⁸

Although Robert Key had chosen not to admit it, it was not only Anglicanism that had changed, but also the Conservative party, particularly in the 1980s. Under Mrs Thatcher, the party had abandoned its distinctly Anglican ethos and embraced a theo-political outlook, which had more in common with nineteenth-century liberalism than traditional Conservatism. Moreover, the new batch of MPs were, broadly speaking, more Thatcherite and came from a much wider base, both socially and religiously. Those that were Christian were predominantly from the evangelical side of Christianity and, as their muted response to the Ordination of Women Measure suggests, they did not have any same affiliation with Anglicanism – with the traditionalist wing or otherwise. Mrs Thatcher's public doctrine may have been a crucial component of Thatcherism and her authority, but it would not be adopted by subsequent leaders of the Conservative party. The replacement of Mrs Thatcher with the irreligious John Major (rather than his fellow contender, the Anglican Douglas Hurd) further ensured that the party's Christian ethos would be less pronounced – although, admittedly, it was not entirely silenced.²⁹

The historic linkages between Toryism and Anglicanism had taken a long time to wither and die. The interwar period had witnessed the beginning of the end of this alliance and from the 1960s onwards, as Anglican social thought established itself on a more socialist and anti-capitalist platform and the Conservative party veered increasingly to the right, this divergence became ever more apparent. In the 1980s, therefore, the Conservative party in partnership with Anglican traditionalists engaged in a battle against the liberal

²⁸ *Parl. Proc.*, HC Debs, 13 February 1989, Vol.147, cols.53-54.

²⁹ Tellingly, John Major's infamous 'Back to Basics' campaign would adopt a moralistic rather than explicitly Christian language and ethos: Garnett, *From Anger to Apathy*, p.294.

Anglican leadership and evoked its 'Church and party' heritage as a way of highlighting the perversions of modern Anglicanism. In this sense, Conservative-Anglicanism enjoyed a brief revival in the 1980s, but this was to be short lived and was followed by a final loosening of the ties between the Church of England and the party. Even though this political and religious affiliation continued to exist amongst some voters, it was no longer represented in the parliamentary party to any significant degree. When, twenty years later, David Cameron sought to reconfigure Conservatism in the mould of earlier Anglican paternalistic traditions, telling it was done so in a secular rather than Christian framework and language.³⁰

III. The Birth of Multi-Faith Britain

The demise of public Anglicanism and the breach between Anglicanism and Toryism in this period was superseded by a much more important event, however, one which would determine the course and position of religion in the public political sphere for the next twenty years. The publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* in September 1988 sparked outrage within Muslim communities from Bombay to Bradford, resulting in widespread demonstrations, violence and even the death of those associated with its publication. It was in Britain, the adopted country of the author and home to its publishers Penguin Viking, where the crisis reached its height with newly-formed Muslim pressure-groups campaigning for the book to be banned and subsequently pursuing legal means to try Rushdie for blasphemy. *The Satanic Verses* controversy, as it became known, has been sufficiently analysed by both academics and commentators.³¹ The purpose here is not to rehearse this narrative, but instead to reflect on how the Rushdie affair forced a greater recognition of the nation's religious pluralism and changed the way in which politicians and the Church articulated and negotiated religion in the public domain.

If the furore surrounding Salman Rushdie's book had achieved anything, it was to ensure that the religious rights of Britain's Muslim population could no longer be ignored. The event had successfully mobilised the community, leading to the formation of the

³⁰ Commenting on his religious beliefs David Cameron has stated: '(My faith is) a bit like the reception for Magic FM in the Chilterns: it sort of comes and goes': <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8661964.stm> (accessed 10/07/10).

³¹ On the British reaction see: Victoria Anne La'Porte, 'The Satanic Verses Controversy: Muslim and Secular Reactions' (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 1996); Paul Weller, *A Mirror for our Times: 'The Rushdie Affair' and the Future of Multiculturalism* (London, 2009); Lisa Appignanesi & Sara Maitland, *The Rushdie File* (London, 1989). For an internationalist perspective on the affair see: Shoaib Qureshi, *The Politics of the Satanic Verses: Unmasking Western Attitudes* (Leicester, 1989); Daniel Pipes, *The Rushdie affair, the Ayatollah, and the West* (New York, 1990); Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam* (London, 1990).

Muslim Action Front, which pursued the legal trial against Rushdie and the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, which would eventually become the Muslim Council of Britain. Sociologist Tariq Modood has correctly judged that the Rushdie affair was a crucial turning point in that it put the spotlight on long-held Muslim grievances and revealed the failures of the existing multicultural legislation. In demographic terms, Britain had become a multi-faith nation in the early 1970s, and yet it was not until the late 1980s when the religious (rather than racial) dimensions of this social change were addressed. Modood has rightly contended that diversity policy up until that point had been conceptualised around a racial (and secular) framework, underscored by a white/black dualism, which completely overlooked the notion of religious identity.³² Secular multiculturalism, therefore, could (and indeed did) co-exist quite happily alongside the continual prioritisation of Christianity in law.³³ The shortcomings of this situation were blatantly exposed by the Rushdie affair, for it revealed the lack of legal redress for the nation's largest religious minority, the limitations of multiculturalism and the problems concerning the privileged place for Christianity on the statute book in a secular plural nation.

One of the most contentious aspects of the whole episode was the attempt by the MAF to try Salman Rushdie under the existing Blasphemy Act.³⁴ After a lengthy legal process and appeal, the High Court in April 1990 finally rejected the case, ruling that the existing Act only protected Christianity. The Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, had refused Muslim pleas to ban the book or extend the act, arguing not from the Christian foundations of the law, but from the point of freedom of speech and the legal difficulties of establishing the appropriate boundaries for protecting religious sensibilities.³⁵ These were perfectly legitimate reasons, although subsequent utterances by Hurd and fellow Home-Office

³² Tariq Modood, *Racial Equality: Colour, Culture and Justice* (London, 1994); *Not East Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1992) and 'British Muslims and the Politics of Multiculturalism' in Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou & Ricard Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach* (London, 2006), pp.37-57. See also John Wolffe (ed.), *The Growth of Religious Diversity, Britain from 1945: A Reader* (Sevenoaks, 6th edition, 1998); Badham (ed.), *Religion, State, and Society*.

³³ Subsequent case law revealed that religious minorities were not protected under the Race Relations Act. Sikhs and Jews were deemed a racial rather than a religious group so were protected, however, Muslims and Christians were not. In the review of the Race Relations Act in 1992, the Commission for Racial Equality acknowledged its failures in assisting religious groups and the flaws of the existing legislation, which, it argued, prevented those subjected to religious discrimination from pursuing their claims in the law courts. It proposed a Human Rights Commission to deal with discrimination in all its forms which the Labour party eventually established once in power.

³⁴ None of the existing legislation relating to incitement to racial hatred, obscenity, indecency or breach of the peace was applicable in the Rushdie case.

³⁵ The government had not acted on the Law Commission's recommendation for the abolition of the Blasphemy Act in the early 1980s. Some Conservatives and Labour MP supported the extension of the Act while the reaction of the Labour party was mixed; some advocated Muslim's right to protest although the majority saw it as an attack on the freedom of speech: Weller, *Mirror For Our Times*, pp.73-79.

colleague John Patten, questioning the loyalty and Britishness of the Muslim community seem to suggest that the Conservative government saw the problem as principally one of Muslim unwillingness to assimilate into British society rather than one of artistic liberty.³⁶ Those on the secular left, who, were as mobilised and as vocal as the Islamic community during the saga, vigorously defended Rushdie's right to freedom of expression and denounced the unreformed and illiberal nature of Islamic fundamentalism.³⁷

The Satanic Verses controversy had important ramifications for the Church of England, not least because the whole debate about the extension of the Blasphemy Act raised serious questions about the prioritisation of Christianity in British law and the establishment of Anglicanism itself. Yet, surprisingly, as the controversy unfolded, it became less about the tensions of Islam in a Christian country and more about the position of Islam in a secular nation.³⁸ This was in part a reflection of greater secularism, but it was also largely down to the Church of England's response to the crisis.

The Anglican position, first stated by Robert Runcie and reiterated by his successor, Archbishop Carey, was one of solidarity with the Muslim community. Speaking soon after the fatwa on Rushdie was issued, Runcie made a public statement affirming that, although the book should not be banned, the Islamic faith should be respected and protected: 'I firmly believe that offence to the religious beliefs of the followers of Islam or any other faith is quite as wrong as offence to the religious beliefs of Christians.'³⁹ By aligning Christianity with Islam, Runcie aimed at creating a sense of solidarity of sacred interests. There was a growing consensus amongst the Church leadership that faiths should stand shoulder to shoulder together against an increasingly vocal and ever-more dominant secular culture. Such was the rationale behind Lambeth Palace's attempts in July 1989 (at the height of the controversy) to persuade the BBC to reschedule a broadcast of Tony Harrison's *A Blasphemy's Banquet*, a poem constructed around an imaginary dinner party of various blasphemers from history including Rushdie, Byron and Voltaire.

The Church's position had always been to support the retention of the Blasphemy Act and to press for an incitement to religious hatred bill for protection of other faiths. In the aftermath of Rushdie controversy, however, the Church became even more accommodating calling for recognition of all faiths within the eyes of the law and the

³⁶ *The Times*, 5 July 1989.

³⁷ La'Porte, 'The Satanic Verses Controversy: Muslim and Secular Reactions', chs.10-11.

³⁸ The exception to this was the campaigning group 'Voices For Salman Rushdie' which stipulated that the disestablishment of the Church of England was necessary in order to ensure Britain's status as a plural nation.

³⁹ Reprinted in Weller, *A Mirror For Our Times*, p.82. See also Walter Schwarz, 'Bishop calls on Penguin to Shelve Verses', *Guardian*, 22 March 1989.

extension of the Blasphemy Act to include all religions.⁴⁰ Soon after the fatwa Runcie set up an Anglican-Muslim consultation party to consider a reformulation of the Blasphemy Act. The intention was clear: that interfaith dialogue on this matter could be a constructive way of legitimating Muslim grievances and bringing Islamic activists into the fold, or as Andrew Brown of the *Independent* put it: ‘there is no better and more effective way of disarming a potential book-burner than to take him to tea at Lambeth Palace and draw him into the endless Anglican conversation.’⁴¹ Brown’s mockery was slightly unfair, for the Church’s support for the Muslim community (especially the Archbishop’s) was extremely important at a time when both the press, the government and secular liberals were engaged in whipping up Islamophobia and when the debate was increasingly being framed as one of British liberal values verses an uncompromising and un-British Islamic fundamentalism. This became even more important during Carey’s leadership in the context of the Gulf War. With sensitivities still high and the fatwa still hanging over Rushdie’s head, Carey issued a statement in which he let it be known that he understood ‘the devout Muslim’s reaction wounded by what they hold most dear and what they themselves would die for.’⁴²

Assessing the Anglican response to the Rushdie affair, Paul Weller has argued that the Church proved itself to be a crucial ‘facilitator’ in legitimising and helping vocalise the concerns and rights of the Muslim community.⁴³ Weller is correct, for while, theoretically, establishment religion appears to prioritise one faith to the detriment of other religious minorities, in this case, the Church of England acted as an enabler for dialogue and as an important spokesperson for a discriminated faith. If *The Satanic Verses* controversy had directly challenged both liberal tolerance and Christian privilege, it became increasingly less about the latter and more about the former, as the debate developed into one about the rights and recognition of the sacred in a secular liberal country. This dualism between the sacred and the secular was reinforced by the fact that the Muslim community not only received support from the Church of England, but also the Chief Rabbi, inter-faith forums and the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁴

For Modood, the obstacle to Islamic integration was not other faiths or the established Church, but the prevailing secular culture. The cause of religious equality,

⁴⁰ ‘Salman Rushdie – *The Satanic Verses* – Runcie calls for broader legislation’, *Independent*, 21 February 1989.

⁴¹ Andrew Brown, *Independent*, 3 August 1989, quoted in Weller, *Mirror For Our Times*, p.86.

⁴² *Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 1991.

⁴³ Weller, *Mirror For Our Times*, p.262-3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.86-95.

therefore, did not start with disestablishment – as previous historical struggles had done. As Modood has explained:

The minimal nature of the Anglican establishment, its relative openness to other denominations and faiths seeking public space and the fact that its very existence is an ongoing acknowledgment of the public character of religion are all reasons why it may seem far less intimidating to minority faiths than a triumphal secularism.⁴⁵

For this reason, Muslims leaders had not called for the abolition but for extension of the Blasphemy Act, as the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs put it: ‘Abolition would mean negative equalisation.’⁴⁶ Muslims did not seek to undermine all religions by the removal of the Blasphemy Act, but equal recognition of all faiths through the extension of it; sentiments with which Anglicans broadly agreed.

The 1980s had seen the established Church increasingly taking an interest in inter-faith dialogue acting as important leaders in the debate about the accommodation of religious minorities within a secular plural country. The British Council of Churches had paved the way with the formation of its ‘Committee for Relations with people for Other Faiths’ and this was reinforced with the establishment of the Inter-Faith Forum in 1987. Collaboration between faith communities had also been making headway at a local level, even though the hierarchy rarely addressed this issue on the national stage.⁴⁷ It was the 1988 Education Act which first forced the Church of England to consider where it stood in relation to other faiths. As we have seen, the Church had advanced the proposal of a multi-faith syllabus while at the same time had sought to maintain Britain’s Christian heritage. Therefore, even though the final Act had retained a privileged status for Christianity, it could be interpreted as a victory for all religions over secularism, for it explicitly prohibited the study of non-theistic world views in RE classes while local RE syllabus boards better reflected the religious pluralism within communities in Britain.

Anglicans continued to act in this spirit of cooperation throughout the 1990s and with even greater urgency in the next decade in the wake of 9/11 and the ‘War on Terror’.⁴⁸ Yet all of this was not simply an act of Christian benevolence, for the Anglican policy of

⁴⁵ Tariq Modood, ‘Minorities, Faith and Citizenship’, in *Discernment: A Christian Journal for Inter-Religious Encounter*, Vol.6, No.2, (1992), p.59, quoted in Paul Weller, ‘The Salman Rushdie controversy, Religious Plurality and Established Religion in England’ (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1996).

⁴⁶ UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, *The Need for Reform: Muslims and the Law in Multi-Faith Britain* (London, 1993), p.39.

⁴⁷ There is hardly any reference made to Christian-Islamic relations or inter-faith dialogue in official Church literature in the first half of the 1980s.

⁴⁸ George Carey, *Know the Truth*, pp.389-98.

reaching out to other faiths and speaking on their behalf had the effect of reinforcing rather than undermining the Church of England's position as the established Church. Just like ecumenicalism in the earlier part of the century, so inter-faithism also served to enhance the Church of England's constitutional credibility. As John Habgood put it in a letter to the *Independent* in the wake of the Rushdie affair, Anglican establishment was necessary precisely because it allowed other religions to flourish, and acted as a protector and enabler of religious pluralism within the nation.⁴⁹ The rationale behind establishment was being reconfigured once more; it was no longer the spiritual arm of a nominally Christian nation, it was now the main spiritual representative of a secular religiously plural society. Whereas earlier in the decade the Church had been seeking to mobilise and articulate the unity values of a Christian nation against the forces of social fragmentation and individualism, now the Church positioned itself as the chief defenders of the sacred (rather than simply Christian) impulse in society, in unison with other faith groups and against the dominant and hostile culture of secularism. There were obvious contradictions with this position, given that it was largely operated on a notion of Anglican dominance (and self-interest), nonetheless it was an idea that was seemingly welcomed and of genuine benefit to other faiths.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, familiar voices of disquiet could be heard within Anglicanism from those who saw inter-faith dialogue as further evidence of the de-christianisation of their Church. Some were at pains to point out that while the ecclesiastical leadership had supported Muslim calls for the extension of the Blasphemy Act, it had not endorsed Mary Whitehouse's blasphemy case against the editor of *Gay News* in 1977. The accusation was that Christianity was increasingly being sidelined in this new multi-faith landscape.⁵¹ The refusal by the Bishop of Manchester to use the traditional hymn 'O Valiant Hearts' at the Remembrance Day service in 1989 so as not to offend non-Christian faiths, was just one example of what many Christians viewed as the Church being overly accommodating to other faiths at the cost of Christian sensibilities.⁵² Some conservative Christians saw the *Rushdie* controversy in slightly different terms, contrasting the Muslim reaction to Rushdie's book with the muted response from British Christians to the film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which had been released the same month as Rushdie's novel. The silence of Christians in contrast to the vocalisation of Muslims was cited as evidence of the lack of

⁴⁹ *Independent*, 3 June 1989.

⁵⁰ The Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sachs had stated as much in his 1990 Reith Lectures: *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age* (London, 1991), see also Tariq Modood (ed.), *Church, State and Religious Minorities* (London, 1997) for the Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist perspective on establishment religion.

⁵¹ See MCL, BCP, Z Files, 'Z' files, Section I Religion, Letters *O' Valiant Hearts* file.

⁵² Similar misgivings had been raised about the use of redundant church buildings by non-Christian faiths.

piousness and religious sensibility amongst the British laity. Traditionalist Anglican Rev. Peter Mullen, for example, viewed the Rushdie furore not as an illustration of Islamic extremism, but further confirmation of paucity of sacredness and religious consciousness within the nation:

Up until fairly recently in England, Christian classic texts were known by heart in large chunks. In the Muslim faith, children still learn the Holy Koran in its original language: these words are not written not just in the refined intellect, but in the heart...the words are truly made flesh, incarnated.⁵³

New alliances were formed among conservative Anglicans, Catholics, Jews and Muslims. Catholic campaigner Victoria Gillick, for example, was surprised to find that her crusade against contraception had more support from non-Christian faiths than the mainstream Christian denominations.⁵⁴ Just as liberal Catholics, Jews, Muslims and Anglicans were engaging in fruitful dialogue, so too did conservative factions of all religions began to realise that they had more in common with each other than those of a liberal persuasion within their own faith.

The *Satanic Verses* controversy was important precisely because it triggered a gradual acceptance of the nation's religious diversity. It also prompted a transformation of the understanding of the religious nation, for no longer could it be simply assumed that Britain was Christian in values or faith. This understanding, which had underlined so much of the debate about political values between the Church and government in the 1980s, was no longer credible and in this new climate, seemed inappropriate and presumptive. While the notion of Britain's Christian heritage still retained currency, no longer did politicians and churchmen make wide-ranging assertions about the relationship between Christian values and the contemporary political scene. This development was both an indication of greater secularity within the political realm and also an increasing investment in the concept of religious plurality. This was a broader shift whereby the key issue was no longer the relationship between Christianity and political values but the rights of the religious individual of all faiths in a liberal secular democracy. It was a change ultimately reflective of a more secular society, but one where the Church of England did still have a vital part to play. This situation in Britain was mirrored across Europe, as nations gradually sought to

⁵³ Peter Mullen, 'Satanic Asides', in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), *The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective* (Lampeter, 1990), p.33.

⁵⁴ Gillick, *Dear Mrs Gillick*, p.156-8.

accommodate the new Islamic faith communities.⁵⁵ The European Declaration on Human Rights, which was incorporated into English and Scottish law in 1998, provided for the first time legal recognition, rights and freedom for all faith groups in Britain. What was once considered as blasphemy, as a crime against God and the Christian state, was now reclassified as a challenge to individual rights and identity. Further legislation was enacted, such as the Race and Religious Hatred Act which aimed to rectify the deficiencies and gaps in previous legislation, although this inevitably encountered opposition from secularists who viewed it as censorship, as well as faith groups, who complained that legislative changes only went part of the way for full recognition of religious rights within British society.

These developments, which had started with the Rushdie controversy, fundamentally reordered how religion was spoken about and dealt with by the ruling elite and the press. Gone were the days when politicians could speak confidently about the Christian ethos of British politics, as Margaret Thatcher had done.⁵⁶ This was replaced with much talk of Britain's tradition of diversity and tolerance. Also gone were the days when the religious correspondent was simply the 'correspondent for the Church of England'. Reporting of religion in Britain increasingly addressed all faiths (and none), while the coverage of the Church of England became more detached and seemingly inconsequential for society as a whole. The status of the Anglican bishops also diminished. The new generation of prelates could not expect to be invited to give televised lectures, act as figureheads for national crisis appeals or assume that their sermons would make front-page news.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, it was the press itself which gradually assumed the moral mantle as guardian of the nation's conscience, obtaining ever-increasing power and influence in setting the boundaries of what constituted 'moral' and 'deviant' behaviour in Britain. When, in 2001, the national Census revealed that over 70 per cent of Britons still identified themselves as 'Christian', it was greeted with surprise and confusion by the press, politicians and even some clergy, who remained doubtful of its significance or sincerity.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Tariq Modood & Pnina Werbner, *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe* (London, 1997); Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou & Ricard Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach* (London, 2006); Tariq Modood & Geoffrey Brahm, *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁵⁶ Politicians came increasingly to speak about their faith in personal rather than explicitly political terms, most evident in the way that Tony Blair elucidated his Christian beliefs: Tony Blair, 'Why I am a Christian', p.57.

⁵⁷ Incidentally, in 2006 Archbishop Williams sparked controversy when he delivered a speech on the integration of Sharia law into Britain's legal code. The *Sun* ran a campaign calling for the Archbishop to be sacked: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article778163.ece> (accessed 10/4/10).

⁵⁸ Full breakdown of the 2001 Census results are given in Appendix X

The 1980s had seen numerous challenges to the nation's Christian legislation and culture in respect to the Blasphemy Act, Sunday trading laws and Christian teaching in schools. On each occasion, the law was unchanged and in some cases was reinforced; the restrictive Sunday trading laws were kept in 1986, the 1988 Education Act reinforced a predominantly Christian curriculum and the Blasphemy law remained in tact.⁵⁹ Clearly this was a defence born not out of confidence in Britain's Christian identity, but out of a concern for it, alluding to a prevailing uneasiness about secularisation and national fragmentation. Yet this process of strengthening various aspects of Christian culture and law obscured the fact that Britain was a nation in transition. Britain in the 1980s was at the crossroads of its religious identity: neither wholly secular, multi-faith, nor Christian, unable to completely reverse to its Christian past, yet neither ready to see itself as a secular plural country. Two decades on, Britain has gradually refashioned herself as a multi-faith nation; a concept, which itself has given rise to a completely new set of questions, challenges and tensions.

⁵⁹ The government-backed Shops Bill to deregulate Sunday trading was successfully defeated in 1986 by a united alliance of Old patrician Tories, the Labour Party and about 70 'Thatcherite' MPs who rebelled against their government.

CONCLUSIONS

The State of Faith and the Faith of the State

Of all the Biblical references that littered the political speeches in the 1980s it was the parable of the Good Samaritan that was most frequently evoked by politicians and clergy.¹ For liberal Anglicans, the story of a Samaritan helping an unknown wounded and battered man lying helpless in the road illustrated the universality of human fellowship and the justification for the indiscriminate redistribution of wealth. For the Conservatives, however, the parable was the shining example of charitable giving and demonstrated the credibility and importance of individual effort, as Mrs Thatcher viewed it: 'No-one would remember the good Samaritan if he'd only had good intentions; he had money as well'.² These differing interpretations neatly demonstrate the wide theo-political gulf that existed between liberal Anglicanism and Conservatism in this period. Both these outlooks presumed an antithesis between transforming the individual and society and were underscored by conflicting understandings of the role of the Christianised state and citizenship.

This debate may have been uniquely focused around the politics of late-twentieth century Britain, yet these contrasting doctrinal positions had a much longer history. Emerging in embryonic form in the nineteenth century, this division had become part of the mainstream of religio-political debate by the interwar period. For this reason, it could be argued that much of the script and sentiments, which would determine the conflict between the Church and state in the 1980s, had already been penned by William Temple in his *Christianity and Social Order* and preached by Alderman Roberts from the pulpit of Finkin St. Chapel some forty years earlier. A reading of G.I.T Machin's historical account of the Christian churches' engagement with politics in twentieth-century Britain illustrates how the dialogue between the Church and the New Right in the 1980s was far from new.³ For it is clear that throughout the century the continual division between reformists and reactionaries within the Church had loosely paralleled the progressive and conservative boundaries within politics and had shaped both Christianity and politics accordingly. If anything, this dualism intensified rather than dissipated in the aftermath of the social and religious upheavals of the 1960s. What makes the conflict between the New Right and liberal Anglicanism in the 1980s significant, however, is that it represented the final gasp of

¹ Partington, *The Contribution*, p.229.

² Interview for LWT's *Weekend World*, 6 January 1980, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104210>, (accessed 10/06/10).

³ Machin, *Churches and Social Issues*.

this theo-political tradition as the ruling elite and the Church were finally forced to accommodate and adapt to the new secular plural age.

In 1941, William Temple claimed that 'all the great political questions of our day are primarily theological' and one of the aims of this study has been to demonstrate how in the 1980s, Christian doctrine continued to be an important means and prism through which political decisions were conceived, communicated and assessed.⁴ Reformulating Temple's statement slightly, it could be said that all the great theological questions of the day are primarily political, for one of the major themes of this story has been of the cross-fertilisation between both religious and political conservatism and liberal Anglicanism and progressive principles. This thesis therefore has sought to demonstrate how the New Right posed a theological challenge to liberal Anglicanism as much as liberal Anglicanism posed a political challenge to the New Right.

In emphasising the particular contribution of the Church of England, this study does not intend to underplay important oppositional forces to the Thatcher government such as the Labour party, but rather to argue that the Church, because of its historic links to Conservatism, offered a distinct challenge to Mrs Thatcher's government. Moreover, it has also demonstrated how the Church of England, as the established Church, inhabited a unique space in the public realm operating as a spiritual check and balance to the state. Its intervention and influence was limited but important and demonstrated that even in more secular times, the Church was still seen as the custodian of moral judgment and still retained residual authority. Yet the story of Anglicanism in the 1980s is not simply one of intellectual musings by theologians and ecclesiastical leaders, for much of what the Church was saying was in this period entirely set within its experiences in the parishes. The Church emerged as an important voice within the community, benefiting from the disillusionment towards bureaucratic centralism and capitalising on its role as a source of pastoral support within civil society. It was thus the social, rather than spiritual, aspect of Anglicanism that attained new credibility in this era.

The Church's foray into politics, however, exasperated existing tensions within the organisation. Social Christianity and the nature and purpose of the Church's prophecy emerged as one of the chief dividing lines between liberals and traditionalists in this period. And the prelates found themselves increasingly compromised as they struggled to both lead the Church and assert their voice on the national stage. At the heart of tension was a fundamental dilemma concerning the role of the national Church in a secular age: should

⁴ Temple's introductory speech to the Malvern Conference 1941, quoted in Grimley, *Citizenship*, p.204.

the Church exist for the benefit of those who are not members of it?⁵ This was recognised by Robert Runcie himself, who, in one of his final Synodical speeches as Archbishop, acknowledged the Catch-22 scenario which had plagued his period in office: ‘A Church that finds itself listening only to the tradition will end up speaking only to itself, a Church that listens only to the world will end up by being simply a dull echo of passing trends.’⁶ For Runcie the answer lay in a middle course between the two, although according to Rev. Gareth Bennett, this was a policy of abstaining from all questions ‘until someone else makes a decision for him.’⁷ A neat parallel can be made between the traditionalist cause in the 1980s and the Oxford Movement in the 1850s – the last occasion when a number of notable Anglicans felt so at odds with the Church’s apparent capitulation to the temporal world that they converted to Roman Catholicism. Schisms within Anglicanism always have been and will remain, a consistent theme in its history. Part of the reason for this is due to the original premise of the Church of England as a theological accommodation between divergent opinions and traditions. Its policy of inclusiveness and consensus, therefore, has inevitably led to fragmentation and factionalism in a way which the more dogmatic and uniform Roman Catholic Church has not.

The challenge posed by Edward Norman’s analysis however, remains: was the Church’s prominent involvement in the politics of the 1980s indicative of the secularisation of Christianity or was it instead reflective of the continual religiosity within the political elite and the nation as a whole? It is the contention here that the 1980s demonstrated both. That secular understandings about equality and social justice had informed Church teachings is incontestable, but this was a demonstration of a genuine exchange of ideas rather than a complete capitulation to secular thought.⁸ At the same time, however, there is little doubt that the Church was engaging with a political culture and society that still valued and respected Christianity, in particular, the Church of England. It was easy to accuse the Church of diluting the Christian faith, but this overlooks the fact that the Church recognised that in order to suffuse political debate with a Christian ethos, it needed to engage in the secular language of political debate. The fact remains that the Church’s

⁵ This quotation is taken from William Temple’s alleged statement, ‘The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.’

⁶ *Proc. of the Gen. Synod 1990*, Vol.21, No.2, 7 July 1990, p.484.

⁷ *Crockford’s Clerical Directory 1987/8*, p.68.

⁸ Norman, *Christianity and the World Order*.

influence in the 1980s would have been unachievable had the Church restricted itself to speaking in purely theological terms.⁹

Historians Callum Brown and Hugh McLeod have both concluded that the 1960s triggered a decline in the influence of Christianity within society and in godly perceptions of the self.¹⁰ One principle argument put forward here is that while the 1960s was an important watershed in the secularisation of individual private morality, the 1980s represents another key turning point; the moment when Christianity finally seeped out of the nation's public and political culture. Moreover, this study adds to existing debates about the impact of secularisation on religious institutions by specifically focusing on how those within the Church either rejected or embraced the challenges of the new secular age. One of the fundamental features of public Anglicanism in the 1980s, therefore, was how it was able to position Christianity in tune with, rather than against modernity, and as a progressive rather than reactionary force in society operating on behalf of the whole of the nation rather than simply its core membership.

Britain's unwritten constitution remains to this day a seemingly archaic and confused settlement particularly in respect to its religious aspects. The established Church of England with the monarch as its head and its bishops in the House of Lords is a situation that few can understand, let alone defend in a secular multi-faith society. And yet, the arrangement of an established Church is not simply an anomaly or hangover from history but a situation which has been debated, defended and ultimately, retained throughout history; with the growth of Nonconformity in the seventeenth century, the acceptance of Catholicism in the nineteenth century, increasing secularisation in the twentieth century and finally, the incorporation of non-Christian faiths in the twenty-first. The 1980s represented an important juncture in this process yet another example of when the Church recalibrated the concept of establishment and adapted its role accordingly to validate its position as the spiritual head of a secular plural society. It is, however, inevitable that the Church will need to return to this issue and the outcome (whether disestablishment or otherwise) will once again reflect Britain's evolving relationship with religion and its relationship to the political system and its people.

The 1980s and Mrs Thatcher have already claimed their place in history; yet this makes it all the more important that historians highlight and assess the oppositional forces

⁹ Partington has calculated that during the 1980s only seven per cent of speeches by bishops in the House of Lords contained 'explicit' Biblical references, 'implicit' references were much more common: Partington, *The Contribution*, pp.248-9.

¹⁰ Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*; McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*.

and challenges that the Conservative government faced in this tumultuous period. It is historically inaccurate but also irresponsible to fuel perceptions that Thatcherism took place in a political vacuum and to portray it as somehow an inevitable providential force in British history; a narrative which this study hopefully goes some way to refuting.

Both Britain and the US in the late-twentieth century saw the emergence of a Christian Conservative movement which intertwined a moralistic with a capitalistic agenda and engaged in a cultural and economic war of words with secular progressive liberals. Assessing the fortunes of the Christian Right in Britain, Steve Bruce has judged that it was unable to penetrate culture and politics to the same degree that it did in America, chiefly because Britain was a secular society.¹¹ This is no doubt true and yet the analysis of the New Right in this thesis suggests that the parallel with the US is limited for altogether different reasons. An examination that incorporates the views of Maurice Cowling, Enoch Powell, Mary Whitehouse and Margaret Thatcher, pertains to the way in which the New Right in the UK was not part of an international phenomenon but very much rooted in the ideas, prejudices and tastes of Englishness. The nature, focus and flavour of the Christian Conservative movement was inextricably tied to the religious culture of England (rather than Britain) and in particular, to the historic bond between Toryism and Anglicanism. Tellingly, the revision of the 1662 Prayer Book incited more anger and mobilised greater opposition within the Synod than the reform of the Abortion Act. While the seventeenth-century Puritan tradition continued to prevail in America, it appears that sixteenth-century debates about the essence of Anglican uniformity continued to be the source of conflict within England. Contrasting religious histories and cultures, therefore, are as crucial as congregational figures in explaining the varying fortunes and character of UK and US Christian conservatism in this period.

This thesis has sought to show how the traditional movement in Christianity paralleled the rise of neo-Conservatism in politics, sharing many of its traits, agenda and not least its votes. Mrs Thatcher, however, stands slightly apart from this, not only because she was culturally Nonconformist but also because her public doctrine was unique to her own religious upbringing and subsequently her personal authority as leader. Even though it could be said that Thatcherism owes more to Methodism than Monetarism and more to Alderman Roberts than Milton Friedman, Margaret Thatcher's specific religious ethos would not have a lasting impact on the party. The new generation of Thatcherites may have

¹¹ Steve Bruce has argued that American religious and political culture made the growth of Christian conservatism possible in the US in a way that it was not in the UK: Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right*, esp. pp.69-76.

enthusiastically embraced her political ideology but they abandoned the theological precepts underpinning it. This hints at one of the chief contradictions of Thatcherism, for while the right spent much of their time arguing in the name of preservation, tradition and history, particularly in respect to religion, the Thatcher administration would oversee a period in which Britain would completely transform and modernise into a new entity and in religious terms, become not more Christian, but more secular and pluralist.

The dialogue between the Church and state in the 1980s concerned two conflicting religious narratives of modern English history. Mrs Thatcher characterised the postwar years as a period of personal and political immorality, while she heralded the Victorian values of self-help, moral restraint and *laissez faire* capitalism as the essential ingredients that would ensure national prosperity and confidence. Anglican leaders, in contrast, portrayed the nineteenth century as a time when wealth and imperialism had been borne on the backs of the nation's powerless citizens. It was not until the twentieth century with the foundation of the welfare state when the nation transformed into a compassionate Christian society. Both the public doctrines of Thatcherism and liberal Anglicanism therefore, were rooted in conflicting providential narratives of the political history of England, which projected two completely divergent understandings of the meaning and characteristics of Englishness and of the nature of Christianity itself.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: The changing fortunes of Christianity in Britain, 1950-1985

Set out below are relevant statistics relating to religious change in the second half of the twentieth century; while the old Protestant churches experienced steady decline, new free churches, especially the charismatic and evangelical churches, were an important growth area.

A. Membership of Christian Denominations, 1950-1985

Year	Denomination					
	C. of E	C. in Wales	C. of Scotland	Pres./Con. Total*	Methodists	Roman Catholic
1950	2 958 840	182 000E**	1 271 247	2 053 059	744 815	3 557 059
1955	2 894 710	176 000E	1 307 573	2 075 274	744 321	3 926 830
1960	(1956) 2 861 887	182 864	1 301 280	2 033 920	728 589	4 495 157
1965	(1966) 2 682 181	165 273	1 247 972	1 939 455	690 347	4 875 825
1970	2 558 966	153 925	1 154 211	1 771 610	601 068	4 932 471
1975	1 912 000E	133 107	1 041 772	1 716 543	541 518	4 996 310
1980	(1976) 1 815 000E	131 518	953 933	1 508 968	487 972	5 085 889
1985	1 672 000E	116 911	870 527	1 388 594	436 049	5 023 736 (1974)

*Presbyterian and Congregational churches in the UK combined, which from 1975 included the United Reform Church.

** (E) stands for estimated numbers.

Source: Table adapted from Peter Brierley, 'Religion' in A. H. Halsey (ed.), *British Social Trends since 1900* (London, 2nd revised edition, 1988), Table 13.3, p. 526. Brierley's statistics for 1950-1966 are taken from Currie, et al., *Churches and Churchgoers*; figures for 1970-1985 are from Brierley (ed.), *UK Christian Handbook, 1987-8*.

B. Numbers of Religious Marriages in England and Wales, 1970-1984

Year	All marriages	Total religious marriages	C. of E & C. in Wales	Roman Catholic
1970	415 487	251 368	170 146	43 658
1975	380 620	198 796	133 074	32 307
1980	370 022	186 627	123 400	33 615
1984	349 186	178 680	117 506	25 609

Source: Peter Brierley, 'Religion', Table 13.23, p.552.

C. Numbers of Anglican Churches and Clergy, 1950-1985

Year	Total parochial clergy*	Churches
1950	13 500 (1951)	—
1955	13 090 (1956)	17 980 (1956)
1960	13 151	17 973 (1961)
1965	13 508	17 761 (1966)
1970	12 905 (1971)	17 670
1975	11 176	17 212
1980	10 563	16 984
1985	10 074 (1984)	16 582

*This figure does not include non-stipendiary clergy or those employed full time as hospital, prison or college chaplains.

Source: Table adapted from Peter Brierley, 'Religion', Table 13.4, p.527. Brierley's statistics on churches are from Currie et al., *Churches and Churchgoers*; 1970-1985 figures from Brierley (ed.), *UK Christian Handbook*, 1987/8.

D. Growth of other Christian Churches in the UK, 1970-1985

Religious organisation	1970	1975	1980	1985
African/West Indian Churches	31 867	59 510	65 076	65 324
'House Church' movement	100	10 000	20 000	75 000
Christian Brethren	80 000	73 000	68 000	70 000
Pentecostal/Holiness	91 439	83 742	89 066	78 247

Source: Table adapted from Peter Brierley, 'Religion', Table 13.11, p.536-7, sourced from Brierley (ed.), *UK Christian Handbook*, 1987/88.

Appendix II: Christian Congregations in the 1980s

Between 1975-1989 Roman Catholics suffered the largest fall, a drop of nine per cent of those attending mass, while traditional Nonconformity and Anglicanism continued to decline.

A. Total Adult Churchgoers in England, 1975-1989

Year	Adult Churchgoers	Percentage Change (%)	Percentage of adult population (%)
1975	4,093,000		11.3
1979	4,025,000	-2	11.0
1985	3,755,000	-7	9.9
1989	3,706,900	-1	9.5

Source: Peter Brierley, *Christian England: What the 1989 English Church Census Reveals* (London, 1991), Table 2, p.30.

Appendix III: Implicit Christianity in the UK: Results of the EVSSG Survey

The EVVSG survey conducted in the late 1970s offers the best indication of nominal Christianity in the UK from this period.

Indicators of religious and moral beliefs and attachment	Great Britain (%)	European Average (%)
Often think about the meaning and purposes of life	34	30
Need moments of prayer, etc.	50	57
Define self as a religious person	58	62
Believe in God	76	73
Sin	69	57
Heaven	57	40
The Devil	30	25
Hell	27	23
Personally full accept Commandments demanding:		
No other Gods	48	48
Reverence of God's name	43	46
Holy Sabbath	25	32
Absolute guidelines exist about good and evil	28	26
Personally fully accept commandments prohibiting:		
Killing	90	87
Adultery	78	63
Stealing	87	82
False Witness	78	73
Agree with unrestricted sex	23	23
Claiming un-entitled benefit is never justified	78	-
Homosexuality is not justified	47	-
Great confidence in Church	19	21
Church answers moral problems	30	35
Church answers family problems	32	33
Church answers spiritual needs	42	44

Attend Church monthly	23	35
Denomination:		
Roman Catholic	11	54
Protestant (established)	68	29
Free Church/Nonconformist	6	2
Believe religion will become:		
More important in future	21	19
Less important in future	40	34
Religious faith an important value to develop in children	14	16

Source: Table adapted from Mark Abrams, et al., *Values and Social Change in Britain*, Table 3.1, p.61.

Appendix IV: Partisan Group Affiliations in the General Synod 1975 and 1981 (%)

Within the General Synod, there was large degree of disparity between the House of Laity which had a large proportion of evangelicals (over a third) and the House of Clergy of which were anglo-catholics (over half). Between 1975 and 1980 there was an overall increase in the number of evangelicals in the House from 27 to 32 per cent. Also important here is the large proportion of members who had no affiliation which accounted for 23 per cent of the Synod in 1975, but only 15.8 per cent in 1981, pointing to the hardening of positions within the Synod in these years. There was also a rise of liberal factions, rising from 32 to 52.5 per cent from the members of 1975 and 1981.

Group	Laity	Clergy	Overall
A. 1975			
Evangelical	33.3	18.5	27.1
Liberals	37.6	24.4	32.0
Catholic	18.8	48.7	31.3
None	24.8	21.8	23.6
N	165	119	284
B. 1981			
Evangelical	34.3	23.4	32.9
Liberals	57.6	40.2	52.5
Catholic	27.7	56.1	44.7
None	15.8	15.9	15.8
N	165	107	272

*Percentages do not amount to 100 as some members claimed an affiliation with more than one faction.

Source: Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics in a Secular Age*, Table 9.2, p.208.

Appendix V. Recommendations to Church and Nation in *Faith in the City*

To the Church of England

1. A national system for designating UPA parishes should be developed.
2. Dioceses should devote greater attention to the effective collection and presentation of accurate statistics.
3. The internal distribution of clergy by diocese should be adjusted where necessary to ensure that UPA parishes receive a fair share, and particular attention should be paid in this respect to parishes on large outer estates.
4. Dioceses should explore the possibilities of fresh stipendiary lay ministries, not necessarily tied to one parish.
5. The 'Audit for the Local Church' which we propose should be further developed, and adopted by local UPA Churches.
6. In urban areas the deanery should have an important support and pastoral planning function.
7. Each parish should review, preferably annually, what progress in co-operation has been made between clergy and laity, between Churches, and ecumenically, with the aim of developing partnership in ministry.
8. Appointments should be made to the Broads and Councils of the General Synod, and a new Commission on Black Anglican Concerns established, to enable the Church to make a more effective response to racial discrimination and disadvantage, and to the alienation experienced by many black people in relation to the Church of England.
9. The General Synod should consider how a more appropriate system of representation which pays due regard to minority interests can be implemented for the Synod elections of 1990.
10. The appropriate Church voluntary bodies should consider how schemes for voluntary service in UPAs could be extended to widen the age range of those eligible, and to allow for part-time as well as full-time volunteering.
11. Dioceses with significant concentrations of UPAs should initiate Church Leadership Development Programmes.
12. Our proposals for an extension of Local Non-Stipendiary Ministry, including those relating to selection, training, and funding should be tested in dioceses, and monitored over a ten-year period.
13. All dioceses should manifest a commitment to post-ordination training and continued ministerial education in UPAs to the extent at least of regular day-release courses.
14. Urgent attention should be given to appropriate training for teachers and supervisors in all areas of theological training education, particularly those concerned with ministry in UPAs, and to the provision of theological and education resources in urban centres.
15. ACCM should be adequately funded to promote and monitor officially sanctioned experiments in theological education.
16. ACCM should be given power, in certain defined cases, to direct candidates to specific courses of training, and bishops should endorse such direction.
17. The role of non-residential training courses similar to the Aston Scheme should be further developed.
18. Diocese and deaneries should undertake a reappraisal of their support systems for UPA clergy.
19. The Liturgical Commission should pay close attention to the liturgical needs of Churches in the urban priority areas.

20. A reassessment of the traditional patterns of the Church's work of nurture of young people in UPAs is required at parish, deanery and diocesan level.
21. Sharing agreements with other denominations should be adopted more widely, as should the informal sharing of church buildings (other than the church itself) with those of other faiths.
22. In cases of the sale of redundant churches, there should be earlier and more open consultation with community organisations and bodies such as housing associations when future uses are being considered.
23. The historic resources of the Church should be redistributed between diocese to equalise the capital and income resources behind each clergyman, deaconess and licensed lay worker in the stipendiary ministry. The redistribution formula should take account of potential giving.
24. Within diocese, the acute financial needs of the urban priority area Churches require a clear response.
25. A Church Urban Fund should be established to strengthen the Church's presence and promote the Christian witness in the urban priority areas.
26. The Church of England should continue to question the morality of economic policies in the light of their effects.
27. Churches should take part in initiatives to engage unemployed people in UPAs in job-creating projects. The use of Church premises for this purpose must be encouraged.
28. The Church should build on good practice in ministry to unemployed people: Industrial Mission has an important role to play here.
29. We commend the use of properly-trained social workers working with local Churches and neighbourhood groups as an important part of the total ministry of the Church in the urban priority areas.
30. Church social workers should be trained within the mainstream of social work, but with particular attention paid to the character and needs of social work in the church context. The Church should initiate discussion with social work training agencies to this end.
31. Diocese should, through their Boards for Social Responsibility, develop and support community work, and should exercise a strategic role in support of local programmes in their urban priority areas.
32. Discussions should be held between the General Synod Board for Social Responsibility and the British Council of Churches Community Work Advisory Committee with a view to strengthening the national support networks for community work. The Church of England should be prepared to devote central resources to this end.
33. Additional Church-sponsored urban studies centres for teacher training should be established.
34. All diocesan Boards and Councils of Education should give special priority to the needs of the UPA schools for which they are responsible.
35. The governors and managers of Church schools should consider whether the composition of foundation governors in the school adequately reflects the ethnic constituency of its catchment area.
36. Consideration should be given to a further exploration of the ecumenical dimension at secondary level, including the possibility of establishing Church of England/Roman Catholic schools in urban priority areas, which would offer a significant proportion of places to children of other faiths.
37. A review of the Diocesan Education Committee measures should be undertaken, to allow the formulation of diocesan policies for Church schools on admission criteria

and other issues, such as religious education and worship, equal opportunities and community education.

38. The General Synod's Board of Education, in consultation with Diocesan Youth Officers, should move towards a national strategy for the Church's work with young people in UPAs, and initiate and support work specifically within these areas.

To Government and Nation

1. A greater priority for the outer estates is called for within urban policy initiatives.
2. The resources devoted to Rate Support Grant should be increased in real terms, and within the enhanced total a greater bias should be given to the UPAs. Efficiency audits should be used to tackle wasteful expenditure.
3. The size of the Urban Programme should be increased, and aspects of its operation reviewed.
4. The concept of 'Partnership' in the urban priority areas should be developed by central and local government to promote greater consultation with, and participation by, local people at neighbourhood level.
5. There should be a new deal between government and the voluntary sector, to provide long-term continuity and funding for recognised voluntary bodies working alongside statutory agencies.
6. A new impetus should be given to support for small firms in UPAs, perhaps by the establishment of a Council for Small Firms in Urban Areas.
7. There should be additional job-creating public expenditure in the UPAs on capital and current account.
8. The Government should promote more open public discussions about the current levels of overtime working.
9. The Community Programme eligibility rules and other constraints, including pay limits, should be relaxed, particularly to encourage greater participation by women and unemployed people with families to support.
10. The Community Programme should be expanded to provide 500,000 places.
11. The Government should extend to those unemployed for more than a year eligibility for the long-term rate of Supplementary Benefit, or an equivalent enhanced rate of income support under whatever new arrangements may be introduced.
12. The present level of Child Benefit should be increased as an effective means of assisting, without stigma, families in poverty.
13. The present levels of 'earnings disregards' in relation to Unemployment Benefit and Supplementary Benefit should be increased to mitigate the effects of the poverty and unemployment traps.
14. The Government should establish an independent enquiry to undertake a wide ranging review of the inter-relationship between income support, pay and the taxation system.
15. Ethnic records should be kept and monitored by public housing authorities, as a step towards eliminating direct and indirect discrimination in housing allocation.
16. An expanded public housing programme of new building and improvement is needed, particularly in the UPAs, to ensure a substantial support of good quality rented accommodation for all who need it, including single people. Each local authority's housing stock should include a range of types of accommodation, including direct access emergency accommodation.
17. The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act should be extended to cover all who are homeless. Homeless people should be offered a choice of accommodation.

18. There should be further moves towards the decentralisation of local authority housing services.
19. A major examination of the whole system of housing finance, including mortgage tax relief, is needed. It should have the objective of providing most help to those most in need.
20. The concept of 'care in the community' for people who might otherwise be institutionalised must be supported by adequate resources to allow the provision of propose locally-based support services for people (especially women) caring for vulnerable and handicapped people.
21. Local authorities in boroughs and districts, which include urban priority areas should, with other agencies, develop policies to establish and sustain community work with adequate resources.
22. The Recommendations of the Lord Chancellor's Committee on the funding of Law Centres should be implemented immediately.
23. The Church, the Home Office and Chief Police Officers should give full support to the work of Police Advisory Committees, and a Police Liaison Committee for Greater London should be established.

Source: *Faith in the City*, pp. 361-66.

Appendix VI: Resolutions and Votes Cast in the General Synod 1979-1990

The following tables are a list of the significant resolutions and votes passed in the Synod relating to political, moral and ecclesiastical measures between 1979-1990. The purpose here is to show the manner of discussions within the debating chamber and the division within the Synod on these matters. The resolutions have been paraphrased, but it should be noted that the initial proposals often went through significant amendments and changes before they were put to a final vote.

A. Political Matters

Date	Resolution	Collective votes in all three Houses		
		For	Against	Abs.*
1981	Resolution in opposition to the government's British Nationality Bill, 1981	198	1	-
1981	Calls for the government to increase Child Benefit in line with inflation	231	1	-
1982	Resolution pertaining to the right of clergy to become MPs	181	147	-
1983	Resolution on the immorality of nuclear weapons and opposition to nuclear rearmament	387	49	29
1983	Resolution against the reintroduction of capital punishment by the government	407	36	10
1983	Resolution urging Parliament to adopt Proportional Representation	251	61	-
1986	Calls for the Treasury to prioritise job creation before cuts in taxation	151	44	41
1986	<i>Not Just for the Poor</i> debate, resolution relating to the right and purpose of statutory welfare	246	2	16
1987	Resolution on the need for decent housing, a revision of mortgage tax relief and the government's duty in respect to the homeless	293	4	-
1989	Resolution condemning the government's proposed changes to the NHS, urging that health rather than cost be the prime objective	238	5	7

* Abstentions.

Source: *Proceedings of the General Synod 1979-1990.*

B. Resolutions and votes passed in the General Synod relating to issues of personal morality, 1979-1990

Date	Resolution	Votes in all three Houses		
		For	Against	Abs.
1983	Proposal for the right of divorce people to get married in Church	284	143	-
1987	Resolution on AIDS, reasserting traditional teachings on chastity and fidelity and calling for compassion for those afflicted with the disease	147	112	-
1987	*Private members motion pertaining to the inherent 'sinfulness' of sexual immorality and homosexuality	403	8	13

* It should be noted that the final resolution diverged significantly from the initial proposal which classified homosexuality as a sin and explicitly denounced homosexuality amongst the priesthood.

Source: *Proceedings of the General Synod 1979-1990*

C. Resolutions and votes passed in the General Synod relating to Ecclesiastical matters, 1979-1992

Date	Resolution	Votes in all three Houses		
		For	Against	Abs.
1982	Proposals for a Covenant*	340	173	3
1983	The acceptance of ordained female priests from overseas to practise in England.	266	153	19
1983	Resolution allowing redundant church buildings to be used by non-Christian faith groups*	216	191	-
1983	The Appointments of Bishops Measure	233	8	-
1987	Clergy Ordination Measure	293	147	6
1992	Female Ordination Measure	384	169	-

* These votes did not receive the required majority of all three houses so therefore were defeated.

Source: *Proceedings of the General Synod 1979-1990*

Appendix VII: Party Political Affiliation in General Synod and at the Grass Roots (%)

In the eighties political scientists Medhurst and Moyser conducted a survey of political affiliations of Anglican congregations and the Synod. The table below reveals that amongst the active, non-active and Synod laity there were a large proportion of Conservative voters. If we compare this with the political preferences of the clergy in the 1981 Synod (see below), only 27 per cent were Conservative voters, compared with 55 per cent of the laity.

A. The Laity

Party Preference	Rank-and-file laity				General Synod laity (1981) (%)
	Penumbra	Intermittently active	Active	Overall (1979) (%)	
Labour	45.2	25.4	23.0	33.9	3.9
Social Democrat*	-	-	-	-	15.8
Liberal	11.9	10.9	14.8	11.7	20.4
Conservative	47.9	63.9	62.3	54.4	55.3
N	219	205	61	485	152

* The SDP was founded in 1981.

Source: Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics in a Secular Age*, Table 10.2a, p.227.

B. The Clergy

Party Preference	Rank-and-file clergy (1982) (%)	General Synod clergy (1981) (%)
Labour	13.0	8.1
Social Democrat	23.2	27.0
Liberal	10.1	23.4
Conservative	31.9	27.9
Social Dem & other party	-	-
Alliance	20.3	-
N	345	111

Source: Medhurst and Moyser, *Church and Politics*, Table 10.2b, p.227.

Appendix VIII: Attitudes Towards Sexual Morality by Level of Church Involvement* (%)

Attitude	Rank-and-file laity (1981)				General Synod (1981)		
	Penumbra	Intermittently Active	Active	Over-all	Over-all	Laity	Clergy
Gone much too far	35.9	42.4	55.1	41.1	34.4	43.5	22.6
Gone a little too far	33.5	32.7	26.1	32.2	26.7	25.5	28.2
About right	27.8	22.1	15.9	23.9	30.2	22.4	40.3
Not gone quite far enough	1.6	1.8	0.0	1.5	7.0	6.8	7.3
Not gone nearly far enough	1.2	0.9	2.9	1.3	1.8	1.9	1.6
Total	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.1	100.0
N	245	217	69	531	285	161	124

Source: Medhurst & Moyser, *Church and Politics in a Secular Age*, Table 10.5, p.240.

* This was in response to the question: 'How do you feel about: 'The liberalisation of the law governing sexual morality?'

Appendix IX: Anglican Conservative faction in the Commons, 1970-1993

A. Votes on Church Measures/religious bills in the Commons

The following is a list of Church Measures and relevant bills relating to 'religious' matters passed or proposed in the Houses of Commons between 1970-1993 ('Moral' issues such as divorce and abortion have not been included here).

Date	Church Measure/ Religious Bills	Commons vote	
		Ayes	Noes
1974	Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure	145	45
1981	Prayer Book Protection Bill	152	130
1984	Church of England (Appointments of Bishops Measure)	17	32
1986	Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure	303	25
1986	Shops Bill on Sunday trading	227	279
1989	Clergy Ordination Measure	45	51
1990	Clergy (Ordination) Measure (re-introduced)	228	106
1993	Church of England (Ordination of Women) Measure	195	19

Source: *Parliamentary Proceedings, Hansard.*

B. Prominent Anglican Conservatives in the Commons 1974-1993

The following is a list of relevant Anglican Conservative MPs and how they voted on the Worship and Doctrine Measure (1974), the Prayer Book Bill (1981), Appointments of Bishops Measure (1984), Female Deacons Measure (1986), Section 28 (1988), Clergy Ordination Measure (1990), the Ordination of Women Measure (1993). Many were not in Parliament for the entire period from 1974-1993 (indicated by a space), some however also did not vote on these measures (absence is indicated -), others voted against or for the bill (a YES/NO denotes which way they voted). The list comprises of some of the key players who spoke out against the Church in this period, while the small numbers that opposed the female ordination Measure in 1993 indicates that this faction within the Conservative party had significantly waned by the mid-1990s.

Conservative MPs	Wor. & Doc. 1974	Pray. Book 1981	App. Of Bps 1984	Fem. Deac. 1986	Sec. 28 1988	Rev. Ord. 1990	Fem. Ord. 1993
Aitken, J.	–	X	X	–	–	YES	–
Beaumont-Dark, A.		X	–	YES	X	X	
Bennett, N.					X	X	
Benyon, W.	YES	NO	–	–	X	X	
Biggs-Davison, J.	X	X	X	X			
Bowden, A.	X	X	–	–	X	X	X
Braine, B.	–	X	–	YES	X	X	
Bruinvels, P.			X	X			
Carlisle, J.		X	X	–	X	X	–
Clegg, W.	X	X					
Colvin, M		X	–	–	X	–	YES
Cormack, P.	X	X	X	–	X	–	X

Conservative MPs	Wor. & Doc. 1974	Pray. Book 1981	App. Of Bps 1984	Fem. Deac. 1986	Sec. 28 1988	Revd. Ord. 1990	Fem. Ord. 1993
Cranborne, Visc.		X	X	–			
Eden, Sir J.	X	X					
Fairbairn, N.	X	X	–	–	–	–	–
Hamilton, Neil			–	X	X	X	–
Hunter, Andrew			–	X	–	X	X
Greenway, H.		X	X	YES	X	X	X
*Gummer, J.		NO	–	X	–	X	X
Kellet- Bowman, E.	X	–	–	YES	X	X	X
Knight, J.	–	X	–	X	X	X	–
Lloyd, P.	–	X	X	YES	X	–	–
Loveridge, J.	X	X					
**Powell, E.	X	X	X	X			
Powell, W.			X	X	X	X	–
Mates, M.	X	X	–	YES	–	–	–
Maxwell- Hyslop, R.	X	X	–	YES	X	–	
Mellor, D.	–	X	–	YES	X	–	–
Macfarlane, N.	X	–	–	–	X	X	
Molyneaux, J.	X	X	–	–	–	–	–
*Mills, P.	YES	–	X	X			
Norris, S.			X	YES	–	X	–

Conservative MPs	Wor. & Doc. 1974	Pray. Book 1981	App. Of Bps 1984	Fem. Deac. 1986	Sec. 28 1988	Revd. Ord. 1990	Fem. Ord. 1993
Stokes, J.	X	X	–	X	–	X	
Smith, Dudley	X	X	–	YES	X	X	–
Soames, N.			X	YES	X	–	–
Stanbrook, I.	X	X	–	X	X	X	
Taylor, R.	X	X					
Taylor, T.	–	X	–	YES	X	X	–
Wells, J.	X	X	X	X			
Widdecombe, A.					X	X	X
Winterton, A.			–	X	X	X	X
Winterton, N.	X	–	–	–	–	X	–
Vaughan, G.	YES	NO	–	–	X	X	–
Younger, G.	X	NO	–	–	X	–	

* The following Conservative MPs were members of the General Synod

** Enoch Powell is considered here as a Conservative, even though he sat on the Unionist benches from 1974 until he left Parliament in 1987.

Appendix X: Statistics on Multi-Faith Britain

A. Figures on non-Christian faith groups in Britain 1970-1985

Religion	1970	1975	1980	1985
Buddhists	6 000	13 000	17 000	23 000
Hindus	50 000	100 000	120 000	130 000
Muslims	250 000	400 000	600 000	852 900
Sikhs	75 000E*	115 000E	150 000E	180 000E
Jews	113 000	111 000	110 915	109 150
International Society for Krishna Consciousness	500	10 000	35 000	40 000E
Ahmadiyya Movement	5000E	8000	10 000	12 000E
School of Meditation	2 821	3 862	4 820	6 000E

* Estimates

Source: adapted from Peter Brierley, 'Religion', Table 13.21, p.550. Brierley's statistics are from *UK Christian Handbook 1978, 1982, 1984, 1986*.

B. 2001 Census Results

In the 2001 census a question on religion was introduced for the first time. The question was 'voluntary' asking simply 'What is your religion?'. In the Scottish census the question was framed differently (I) 'What is your current religion?' (II) 'What was the religion of your upbringing?'

Religion	%
Christian	71.8
Muslim	2.8
Hindu	1
Sikh	0.6
Jewish	0.5
Buddhist	0.3
Other religions	0.3
All religions total: 77.3%	
No religion: 15%	
Not stated	7.7

Source: Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics, www.statistics.gov.uk

Bibliography

Archive Material

Blanch, Lord Stuart, Papers, Borthwick Institute, University of York
Board for Social Responsibility Archive, Church of England Record's Centre, Lambeth Palace Library¹²
Booth-Clibborn, Stanley, Papers, Manchester Central Library, Manchester
British Council of Churches Archive, Lambeth Palace Library, London
Central Religious Advisory Committee Archive, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading
Christian Action Archive, Lambeth Palace Library, London
Church Action on Poverty Archive, Church Action on Poverty, Manchester
Habgood, Lord John, Papers, Borthwick Institute, University of York
Methodist Church Archives, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Manchester
Powell, Enoch, Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge
Sheppard, Lord David, Papers, Liverpool City Archives, Liverpool
Thatcher, Margaret, Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge
Worlock, Derek, Papers, Metropolitan Cathedral Archives, Liverpool

Diocesan Archives

Winchester Diocesan Archives, Hampshire Record Office
York Diocesan Archives, Borthwick Institute, University of York

Newspapers and Periodicals

Baptist Times
Christian Action Journal
Church Times
COSPEC newsletter
Crucible
Daily Express
Daily Mirror
Daily Telegraph
Encounter
The Mail on Sunday
Methodist Recorder
The Guardian
The Independent
The Listener
Liverpool Daily Post
The Liverpool Echo
New Society
New Statesman
Poetry Review
Poverty Network
Salisbury Review
The Spectator
The Sun
Sunday Express

¹² Records deposited at Lambeth Palace Library and the Church of England Record Centre are subjected to a 30 year closure period. Access to Board of Social Responsibility material was obtained from the record owners, the Archbishop's Council.

Sunday Telegraph
Theology
The Times
Yorkshire Evening Press
Yorkshire Post
Winchester Churchman

Directories/Reference Works

Crockford's Directory of Church of England Clergy
Parliamentary Proceedings, Hansard
Proceedings of the General Synod
Abrams, Mark, David Gerard & Noel Timms, *Values and Social Change in Britain* (Basingstoke, 1985)
Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1987* (Basingstoke, 1987)
Brierley, Peter, *UK Christian Handbook 1987/8 Edition* (London, 1988)
- *Prospects for the Nineties: Trends and Tables from the English Church Census* (London, 1991)
- *'Christian England': What the 1989 English Church Census Reveals* (London, 1991)
Commission of the European Communities, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe* (Brussels, 1977)
Halsey, A. H. (ed.), *British Social Trends since 1900* (London, 2nd revised edition, 1988)
Jowell, R. & C. Airey (eds.), *British Social Attitudes the 1984 Report* (Aldershot, 1984)

TV/Radio Broadcasts

Boys From the Blackstuff (BBC, 1982)
Breadline Britain (LWT, 1983)
The Canterbury Tales (Channel 4, 1996)
The Purple, the Blue and the Red: 3 part series (BBC, 1996) Transcript deposited in the Lambeth Palace Library

Interviews

Rev. David Jenkins, 10 July 2007
Ronnie Bowlby, former Bishop of Southwark, 5 September 2006
Faith in the City Commission, Centre for Contemporary British History Witness Seminar, Recorded 5 July 2006, unpublished transcript

Memoirs/Diaries

Hurd, Douglas, *Memoirs* (London, 2003)
Jenkins, David, *Not Just an Autobiography. The Calling of a Cuckoo* (London, 2002)
Millar, Ronald, *The View From the Wings: West End, West Coast, Westminster* (London, 1993)
Sheppard, David, *Steps Along Hope Street: My Life in Cricket, the Church and the Inner City* (London, 2002)
Tebbit, Norman, *Upwardly Mobile: An Autobiography* (London, 1988)
Thatcher, Margaret, *The Downing Street Years* (London, 1993)
- *The Path to Power* (London, 1995)
Webster, Alan, *Reaching for Reality: Sketches from the Life of the Church* (London, 2002)
Winter, David, *Winter's Tale. Living through an Age of Change in Church and Media* (Oxford, 2001)

Official Church of England Publications

- Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity* (London, 1987)
The Church and the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons and Christian Conscience (London, 1982)
Commission on Urban Priority Areas (London, 1985)
Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation. The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faith in the Countryside: The Archbishop's Commission on Rural Affairs (London, 1990)
Foreword to Marriage (London, 1984)
The Future of the Welfare State: Questions which need attention (London, 1984)
Issues in Human Sexuality (London, 1991)
It's for you: A Study guide to Faith in the City (London, 1986)
Living Faith in the City (London, 1990)
The Nature of Christian Belief (London, 1986)
Not Just for the Poor. Christian Perspectives on the Welfare State (London, 1986)
Reform of Social Security: Response of the BSR General Synod of the Church of England to DHSS Green Paper (London, 1985)
Staying in the City: Faith in the City Ten Years On (London, 1995)
To a Rebellious House? Report of the Church of England's Partners in Mission Consultation (London, 1981)
Understanding Closed Shops (London, 1977)
Unemployment and the Future of Work (London, 1997)
Winters of Discontent. Industrial Conflict: a Christian Perspective (London, 1981)
Work and the Future: Technology, World Development and Jobs in the Eighties (London, 1979)

Contemporary Articles, Books, Pamphlets and Speeches

- No author, *The Crisis in Religious Education* (London, 1988)
- *Law, Blasphemy and the Multi-Faith Society* (London, 1990)
- *The Market and Healthcare* (Edinburgh, 1990)
- *The New Black Presence in Britain: A Christian Scrutiny* (London, 1976)
- *Proceedings of 'Poverty Today', Occasional Paper No.7* (Edinburgh, 1986)
- UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, *The Need for Reform: Muslims and the Law in Multi-Faith Britain* (London, 1993)
Addy, T. & D. Scott, *Fatal Impacts? The MSC and Voluntary Action* (Manchester, 1987)
Ahern, Geoffrey & Grace Davie, *Inner City God: the Nature of Belief in the Inner City* (London, 1987)
Anderson, Digby & June Lait & David Marsland (eds.), *Breaking the Spell of the Welfare State: Strategies for Reducing Public Expenditure* (London, 1981)
- Anderson, Digby (ed.), *The Kindness that Kills: The Churches' Simplistic Response to Complex Social Issues* (London, 1984)
Ashford, Sheena & Noel Timms, *What Europe Thinks: A study of Western European Values* (Dartmouth, 1992)
Atherton, John, *The Scandal of Poverty. Priorities for the Emerging Church* (London, 1983)
- *Faith in the Nation: A Christian Vision for Britain* (London, 1988)
- *Christianity and the Market. Christian Social Thought for our Times* (London, 1992)
Avis, Paul, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (London, 1992)
Badham, Paul (ed.), *Religion, State, and Society in Modern Britain* (Lampeter, 1989)
Barnett, Correlli, *The Audit Of War. The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London, 1987)
Bigger, Nigel, *Theological Politics: a Critique of 'Faith in the City', the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas* (Oxford, 1988)
Blair, Tony, *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country* (London, 1996)
Bonino, Jose Miguez, *Christians and Marxists: the Mutual Challenge to Revolution* (London, 1976)

- Booth-Clibborn, Stanley, *Taxes: Burden or Blessing?* (London, 1991)
- Bowpitt, G., *The Clergy in the Local Community: a summary* (York, 1999)
- Boyson, Rhodes (ed.), *Down with the Poor* (London, 1971)
- Bryant, Chris, (ed.), *Reclaiming the Ground* (London, 1993)
- *Possible Dreams. A Personal History of the British Christian Socialists* (London, 1996)
- Campbell, Beatrix, *Wigan Pier Revisited. Poverty and Politics in the Eighties* (London, 1984)
- Chadwick, Owen, *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford, 1990)
- Coggan, Donald, *Call to the Nation* (London, 1975)
- Cohn-Sherbok, Dan, *The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective* (Lampeter, 1990)
- Collings, Rex (ed.), *Reflections of a Statesman: the Writings and Speeches of Enoch Powell* (London, 1992)
- Cornwell, Peter, *Church and Nation* (Oxford, 1983)
- Craven, Mike & Graeme Smith, *Party Games. Christian Engagement in the Political Process* (London, 1998)
- Ecclestone, Giles, *The Church of England and Politics* (London, 1981)
- Edwards, David L. (ed.), *Robert Runcie; A Portrait by His Friends* (London, 1990)
- & Alison, M. (eds.), *Christianity and Conservatism: Are Christianity and Conservatism Compatible?* (London, 1990)
- Eliot, T.S., *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London, 1939)
- *Christianity and Culture* (New York, 2nd edition, 1949)
- Elliot, Charles, *Christian Faith and Political Hopes: a Reply to E R Norman* (London, 1979)
- Farnell, Rob, et al., *Hope in the City? The Local Impact of the Church Urban Fund* (Sheffield, 1994)
- Field, Frank, *The Politics of Paradise: a Christian Approach to the Kingdom* (London, 1987)
- Forrester, Duncan B., *Christianity and the Future of Welfare* (London, 1985)
- & Danus Skene, *Just Sharing: a Christian Approach to the Distinction of Wealth, Income and Benefits* (Edinburgh, 1988)
- *Beliefs, Values and Policies: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age* (Oxford, 1989)
- & Malcolm Cuthbertson, *Rethinking Christian Action* (London, 1989)
- Habgood, John, *Church and Nation in Secular Age* (London, 1983)
- *Confessions of a Conservative Liberal* (London, 1988)
- Harries, R., *Is there a Gospel for the Rich? The Christian in a Capitalist World* (London, 1992)
- Harris, Robin (ed.), *The Collected Speeches of Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1997)
- Harrison, T., *The Durham Phenomenon* (London, 1985)
- Harrison, P., *Inside the Inner City: Life under the Cutting Edge* (Harmondsworth, 1983)
- Harvey, Anthony (ed.), *Theology in the City: a Theological Response to Faith in the City* (London, 1989)
- Haseler, Stephen, *The Battle for Britain. Thatcher and the New Liberals* (London, 1989)
- Holloway, David, *The Church of England: Where is it Going?* (Eastbourne, 1985)
- *A Nation Under God* (London, 1987)
- Hutber, Patrick, *The Decline and Fall of the Middle Class and How it Can Fight Back* (London, 1976)
- Gill, Robin, *Prophecy and Praxis* (London, 1981)
- *Beyond Decline: a Challenge to the Churches* (London, 1988)
- *Christian Ethics in Secular Worlds* (Edinburgh, 1991)
- Gillick, Victoria, *Dear Mrs Gillick* (Basingstoke, 1985)
- *A Mother's Tale* (London, 1989)
- Griffiths, Brian, *Morality and the Market Place: Christian Alternatives to Capitalism and Socialism* (London, 1982)
- *The Creation of Wealth: A Christian's Case for Capitalism* (London, 1984)
- *Monetarism and Morality. A Response to the Bishops* (London, 1985)
- Gummer John, *The Permissive Society: Fact or Fantasy?* (London, 1971)

- & Eric S. Heffer & Alan Beith, *Faith in Politics. Which Way should Christian Vote?* (London, 1987)
- Jakobovitz, Immanuel, *From Doom to Hope: a Jewish View on Faith in the City* (London, 1986)
- Jenkins, Daniel, *The British; their Identity and their Religion* (London, 1975)
- Jenkins, David, *God, Politics and the Future* (London, 1988)
- *Market Whys and Human Wherefores: Thinking Again about Markets, Politics and People* (London, 2000)
- Jenner, Brian, *The Coal Strike: Christian Reflections on the Miners' Struggle* (Sheffield, 1986)
- Joseph, Keith, *Stranded on the Middle Ground: Reflections on Circumstances and Policies* (London, 1976)
- Leech, Kenneth, *Struggle in Babylon. Racism in the Cities and Churches of Britain* (London, 1988)
- Longenecker, Dwight (ed.), *The Path To Rome: Modern Journeys to the Catholic Church* (Bodmin, 1999)
- Longford, F., *The Bishops: A Study of Leaders in the Church Today* (London, 1986)
- Lovell, Terry, *Number One Millbank. The Financial Downfall of the C. of E.* (London, 1998)
- Mack, Joanna & Stewart Lansley, *Poor Britain* (London, 1985)
- Montefiore, Hugh, *Christianity and Politics* (Basingstoke, 1990)
- Moore, Charles, Gavin Stamp & A. N. Wilson, *The Church in Crisis* (London, 1986)
- Moore, John, *End of the Line for Poverty* (London, 1989)
- Moore, Peter (ed.), *The Synod of Westminster: Do We Need it?* (London, 1986)
- Moyser, George (ed.), *Church and Politics Today: The Role of the Church of England in Contemporary Politics* (Edinburgh, 1985)
- Nash, Ronald H., *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (London, 1990)
- Newman, David, *Taking on Faith in the City* (Nottingham, 1986)
- Nielson, Jorgen S. (ed.), *'The Rushdie Affair': A Documentation* (Birmingham, 1989)
- Norman, Edward R., *Church and Society in England 1770-1970* (Oxford, 1976)
- *Christianity and the World Order* (Oxford, 1979)
- Padila, Rene & Chris Sugden, *How Evangelicals Endorsed Social Responsibility* (Grove, 1985)
- Powell, Enoch, *No Easy Answers* (London, 1973)
- *Wrestling With the Angel* (London, 1977)
- Preston, R. H., *Church and Society in the Late Twentieth Century: the Economic and Political Task* (London, 1983)
- *The Future of Christian Ethics* (London, 1987)
- *Religion and the Ambiguities of Capitalism* (London, 1991)
- Pym, Francis, *The Politics of Consent* (London, 1984)
- Oddie, William, (ed.), *After the Deluge: Essays towards the Desecularisation of the Church* (London, 1987)
- *The Crockford's File: Gareth Bennett and the Death of the Anglican Mind* (London, 1989)
- Ormrod, David, *Facing the Future as Christians and Socialists* (CSM, 1985)
- (ed.), *Fellowship, Freedom and Equality Lectures in Memory of R H Tawney* (CSM, 1990)
- Owen, David, *Human Rights* (London, 1978)
- Raban, Jonathan, *God, Man, and Mrs Thatcher. A Critique of Mrs Thatcher's Address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (London, 1989)
- Sachs, Jonathan, *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age* (London, 1991)
- Scruton, Roger, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (London, 1980)
- (ed.), *Conservative Thoughts: Essays from The Salisbury Review* (London, 1988)
- (ed.), *Conservative Texts; An Anthology* (Basingstoke, 1991)
- Sheppard, David, *Bias to the Poor* (London, 1983)
- *The Other Britain* (Nottingham, 1984)
- & Derek Worlock, *Better Together Christian partnership in a Hurt City* (Harmondsworth, 1989)
- Smith, Bernard, *The Fraudulent Gospel: Politics and the World Council of Churches* (Surrey, 1979)

- Stockwood, Mervyn, *The Cross and The Sickle* (London, 1978)
- Suggate, Alan M., *William Temple and Christian Social Ethics Today* (Edinburgh, 1987)
- Temple, William, *Christianity and Social Order* (London, 1976 edition)
- Thatcher, Margaret, *Reason and Religion: the Moral Foundations of Freedom* (London, 1996)
- Tingle, Rachel, *Gay Lessons: How Public Funds are used to Promote Homosexuality among Children and Young People* (London, 1986)
- *Another Gospel? An Account of the Growing Involvement of the Anglican Church in Secular Politics* (London, 1988)
- Towler, Robert & A.P.M. Coxon, *The Fate of the Anglican Clergy* (Basingstoke, 1979)
- Walter, Tony, *Fair Shares? An Ethical Guide to Tax and Social Security* (Edinburgh, 1985)
- Warren, Allen (ed.), *A Church For the Nation* (Leominster, 1992)
- Watts, Michael (ed.), *Through a Glass Darkly: A Crisis Considered* (Leominster, 1993)
- Weber, Max, (trans. Talcott Parsons) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (New York, 1958)
- (trans. A. M. Henderson & Talcott Parsons), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (London, 1964)
- Whiteley, Paul, 'Public Opinion and the Demand for Social Welfare in Britain', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol.10, (1981), pp.160-170
- *Pressure for the Poor: the Poverty Lobby and Policy Making* (London, 1987)
- Wiener, Martin J., *English Culture and The Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Harmondsworth, 1981)
- Williams, Shirley 'The Church and Politics' in Donald Reeves (ed.), *The Church and the State* (London, 1984), pp.25-37
- Winter, David, *Battered Bride? The Body of Faith in an Age of Doubt* (Eastbourne, 1988)

Published Secondary Material

- Abse, Leo, Margaret, *Daughter of Beatrice. A Politician's Psycho-Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1989)
- Adonis, Andrew, & Tim Hames (eds.), *A Conservative Revolution. The Thatcher-Reagan Decade in Perspective* (Manchester, 1994)
- Alcock, Peter, *Poverty and State Support* (London, 1987)
- Appignanesi, Lisa, & Sara Maitland, *The Rushdie File* (London, 1989)
- Ball, Stuart, *The Conservative Party and British Politics, 1902-1951* (Harlow, 1995)
- Bentley, Michael (ed.), *Public and Private Doctrine: Essays in British History Presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge, 1993)
- Berger, Peter, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, 1967)
- (eds.), *The Desecularisation of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, 1999)
- Bogle, Joanna (ed.), *Come On In, It's Awful* (Leominster, 1994)
- Brown, G. Callum, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London, 2001)
- *Religion and Society in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 2006)
- Brown, Malcom & Paul H. Ballard, *The Church and Economic Life. A Documentary Study: 1945 to the Present* (Peterborough, 2006)
- Bruce, Steve, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988* (Oxford, 1988)
- *Religion and Modernisation: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularisation Thesis* (Oxford, 1992)
- *Religion in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1995)
- *God is Dead. Secularisation in the West* (Oxford, 2002)
- *Politics and Religion: an Introduction* (Oxford, 2003)
- Bulpitt, J., 'The Discipline of the New Democracy: Mrs. Thatcher's Domestic Statecraft', *Political Studies*, Vol.34, No.1, (1986), pp. 19-39

- Currie, R., A.D. Gilbert, & L. Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers. Patterns of Church growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977)
- Cameron, Helen, 'The British Government and the Inner Cities Religious Council', in Grace Davie, Linda Woodhead & Paul Heelas (eds.), *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular, and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot, 2003), pp.120-135.
- Carpenter, Humphrey, *Robert Runcie: the Reluctant Archbishop* (London, 1996)
- Casanova, Jose, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994)
- Catterall, Peter, 'The Party and Religion' in A. Seldon & S. Ball (eds.), *The Conservative Century* (Oxford, 1994), pp.637-670
- Campbell, John, *Margaret Thatcher: The Grocer's Daughter Vol. I* (London, 2001)
- *Margaret Thatcher: The Iron Lady Vol. II* (London, 2004)
- Clark, David, *Between Pulpit and Pen: Folk Religion in a North Yorkshire Fishing Village* (Cambridge, 1982)
- Clarke, Peter, *A Question of Leadership: Gladstone to Thatcher* (London, 1991)
- *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000* (London, 2nd edition, 2004)
- Clark, Henry, *The Church Under Thatcher* (London, 1993)
- Cowling, Maurice (ed.), *Conservative Essays* (London, 1978)
- *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England Vol. I* (Cambridge, 1980)
- *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England Vol. II Assaults* (Cambridge, 1985)
- *Mill and Liberalism* (Cambridge, 2nd edition, 1990)
- *Religion and Public Doctrine Vol. III Accommodations* (Cambridge, 2001)
- Covell, Charles, *The Redefinition of Conservatism. Politics and Doctrine* (Basingstoke, 1986)
- Cox, Jeremy, *The Churches in a Secular Society; Lambeth 1870-1930* (Oxford, 1982)
- Crewe, Ivor, & Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1995)
- Crick, Michael, *The March of the Militant* (London, 1986)
- Crozier, Michael, *The Making of the Independent* (London, 1988)
- Dale, Graham, *God's Politicians: The Christian Contribution to 100 years of Labour* (London, 2000)
- Davie, Grace, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, 1994)
- Deakin, Nicholas & John Edwards, *The Enterprise Culture and the Inner City* (London, 1993)
- Deakin, Nicholas, *In Search of Civil Society* (Basingstoke, 2001)
- Denham, Andrew & Mark Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Buckinghamshire, 2002)
- Dennis, Norman, *Uncertain Trumpet. History of Education in CofE Schools* (London, 2001)
- Donnison, David, *The Politics of Poverty* (Oxford, 1982)
- Durham, Martin, *Sex and Politics: The Family and Morality in the Thatcher Years* (Basingstoke, 1991)
- Evans, Brendan, *Thatcherism and British Politics 1975-1999* (Stroud, 1999)
- Evans, Stephen, 'The Earl of Stockton's Critique of Thatcherism', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 1998, Vol.51 (1), pp.17-35
- Finlayson, Geoffrey, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford, 1994)
- Furnival, John & Ann Knowles, *Derek Worlock. His Personal Journey* (London, 1998)
- Gamble, Andrew, *The Free Economy and the Strong State. The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, 2nd edition, 1994)
- Gardiner, George, *Margaret Thatcher: From Childhood to Leadership* (London, 1975)
- Garfield, Simon, *The End of Innocence: Britain in the Time of AIDS* (London, 1994)
- Garnett, Jane, Matthew Grimley, Alana Harris, William Whyte & Sarah Williams, *Redefining Christian Britain: Post 1945 Perspectives* (London, 2007)
- Garnett, Mark, *From Anger to Apathy: The British Experience since 1975* (London, 2007)
- & Lord Gilmour, 'Thatcherism and the Conservative Tradition' in M. Francis & I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds.), *The Conservatives and British Society 1880-1990* (Cardiff, 1996), pp.78-95

- Gilbert, Alan, *The Making of post-Christian Britain: a History of the Secularisation of Modern Society* (London, 1980)
- Gilmour, Ian, *Dancing with Dogma. Britain under Thatcherism* (London, 1992)
- Gilley, Sheridan, & W.J. Sheils (eds.), *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford, 1994)
- Green, E. H. H., *Ideologies of Conservatism. Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2002)
- *Thatcher* (London, 2006)
- Green, S.J.D., 'Survival and Autonomy: on the Strange Fortunes and Peculiar Legacy of Ecclesiastical Establishment in the Modern British State c.1920 to the Present Day' in S. J. D. Green & R.C. Whiting, *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 299-324
- Grimley, Matthew, *Citizenship, Community and the Church of England. Liberal Anglican Theories of the State between the Wars* (Oxford, 2004)
- 'Law, morality and Secularisation: The Church of England and the Wolfenden Report, 1954-1967', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol.60, No.4, (October 2009), pp.725-41
- Hall, Stuart & Martin Jacques, *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, 1983)
- *The Hard Road to Renewal; Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London, 1988)
- Harris, Kenneth, *Thatcher* (London, 1988)
- Harrison, Brian, 'The Rise, Fall and Rise of Political Consensus in Britain since 1940', *History*, Vol.84, No.274, (April 1999), pp.301-24
- Hastings, Adrian, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990* (London, 4th edition, 2001)
- Hatton, Derek, *Inside Left. The Story So Far* (London, 1988)
- Hayter, Dianne, *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s* (Manchester, 2007)
- Heffer, Simon, *Like the Roman: the Life of Enoch Powell* (London, 1998)
- Heffernan, R. & M. Marqusee, *Defeat From the Jaws of Victory Inside Kinnock's Labour Party* (London, 1992)
- Herbert, David, *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World* (Aldershot, 2003)
- Hilton, Boyd, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988)
- Holden, Andrew, *Makers and Manners: Politics and Morality in Post-War Britain* (London, 2004)
- Hollenbach, David, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics* (London, 2003)
- Isaac, Joan, 'The New Right and the Moral Society', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.43, No.2, (April, 1990), pp.209-227
- 'The Politics of Morality in the UK', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.47, No.2, (April, 1994), pp.175-189
- Jones, Ian, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England: Ten Years On* (Manchester, 2004)
- Kavanagh, D. & Anthony Seldon (eds.), *The Thatcher Effect: A Decade of Change* (Oxford, 1989)
- 'Thatcher's Third Term', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.41, No.1, (1988), p.1-12.
- King, Desmond S., *The New Right: Politics, Markets and Citizenship* (London, 1987)
- King, Roger, & Neill Nugent (eds.), *Respectable Rebels: Middle Class Campaigns in the 1970s* (London, 1979)
- Kirby, Dianne (ed.), *Church, State and Propaganda: A Political Study of Archbishop Cyril Foster Garbett* (Hull, 1999)
- Koven, Seth, *Slumming. Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, 2004)
- Lansley, Stewart, Sue Goss & Christian Wolmar, *Councils in Conflict: the Rise and Fall of the Municipal Left* (Basingstoke, 1989)
- Lee, Simon & Peter Stanford, *Believing Bishops* (London, 1990)
- Letwin, Shirley, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* (London, 1992)
- Lewis, Jane, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain* (Aldershot, 1995)

- MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London, 2009)
- Machin, G.I.T., *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1832 to 1868* (Oxford, 1977)
- *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869 to 1921* (Oxford, 1987)
- *Church and Social Issues in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998)
- MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue; a study in Moral Theology* (London, 1981)
- Maiden, John, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-8* (London, 2009)
- Martin, David, *A General Theory of Secularisation* (Oxford, 1978)
- *On Secularisation: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, 2005)
- Marwick, Arthur, *British Society since 1945* (London, 4th edition, 2003)
- McLeod, Hugh & Werner Ustorf (eds.), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe 1750-2000* (Cambridge, 2003)
- *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007)
- Modood, Tariq, *Not Easy Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1992)
- *Racial Equality: Colour, Culture and Justice* (London, 1994)
- (ed.), *Church, State and Religious Minorities* (London, 1997)
- & Anna Triandafyllidou & Ricard Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and*
- & Geoffrey Brahm Levey (eds.), *Secularism, Religion, and Multicultural Citizenship* (Cambridge, 2009)
- Citizenship; A European Approach* (London, 2006)
- Morris, Lydia, *Dangerous Classes: the Underclass and Social Citizenship* (London, 1994)
- Morrison, David & Michael Tracey, *Whitehouse* (London, 1979)
- Murray, Tricia, *Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1978)
- Nunn, Heather, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy: the Political Culture of Gender and Nation* (London, 2002)
- Quinton, Anthony, *The Politics of Imperfection: the Religious and Secular Traditions of Conservative thought in England from Hooker to Oakesbott* (London, 1978)
- Qureshi, Shoaib, *The Politics of the Satanic Verses: Unmasking Western Attitudes* (Leicester, 1989)
- Parry, J.P., *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1986)
- Parsons, Gerald, *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945* (London, 1994)
- 'How the times they were a-changing; exploring the context of religious transformation in Britain in the 1960s' in John Wolffe (ed.), *Religion in History: Conflict, Conversion and Coexistence* (Manchester, 2004), pp.161-189
- Partington, Andrew, *Church and State: The Contribution of the Church of England Bishops to the House of Lords during the Thatcher Years* (Milton Keynes, 2006)
- Pearl-Binns, John, *Graham Leonard, A Biography* (London, 1988)
- Pedersen, Susan, 'What is Political History Now?' in David Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.36-56
- Peel, Mark, *The Last Wesleyan: a Life of Donald Soper* (Lancaster, 2008)
- Petre, Jonathan, *By Sex Divided: The Church of England and Women Priests* (London, 1994)
- Pimlott, Ben, 'The Myth of Consensus' in L.M. Smith (ed.), *The Making of Britain. Echos of Greatness* (London, 1988)
- Pipes, Daniel, *The Rushdie Affair, the Ayatollah, and the West* (New York, 1990)
- Plant, Raymond, *Politics, Theology and History* (New York, 2001)
- Platten, Stephen, *Runcie: on Reflection* (Norwich, 2002)
- Porter, Bernard, 'Though Not an Historian Myself....' Margaret Thatcher and the Historians, *Twentieth Century British History Journal*, (1994) Vol.5, No.2, pp.246-256.
- Prochaska, Frank, *A Disinherited Spirit: Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2006)
- Rees, Christina (ed.), *Voices of this Calling: Experiences of the First Generation of Women Priests* (Norwich, 2002)
- Riddell, Peter, *The Thatcher Era and its Legacy* (Oxford, 2nd edition, 1991)

- Rogers, D., *Politics, Prayer and Parliament* (London, 2000)
- Ruthven, Malise, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam* (London, 1990)
- Samuel, Raphael, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain, Theatres of Memory, Vol. II* (London, 1998)
- Seyd, Patrick, *The Rise and Fall of the Labour Left* (Macmillan, 1987)
- Shal, Eric, *Discipline and Discord in the Labour Party: The Politics of Managerial Control in the Labour Party 1951-1987* (Manchester, 1988)
- Skidelsky, Robert (ed.), *Thatcherism* (London, 1988)
- Smith, Graeme, 'Margaret Thatcher's Christian Faith: A Case Study in Political Theology', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol.35, No.3, (June 2007), pp. 233-257
- Stephenson, Hugh, *Claret and Chips: the rise of the SDP* (London, 1982)
- Taaffe, Peter & Tony Mulhearn, *Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight* (London, 1988)
- Tunny, Sean, *Labour and the Press: From New Left to New Labour* (Brighton, 2007)
- Vinen, Richard, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London, 2009)
- Webster, Wendy, *Not a Man to Match her: The marketing of a Prime Minister* (London, 1990)
- Weeks, Jeffrey, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the 19th century to the Present* (London, revised edition, 1990)
- Weller, Paul, *A Mirror for our Times: 'The Rushdie Affair' and the Future of Multiculturalism* (London, 2009)
- Welsby, P. A., *A History of the Church of England 1945-80* (Oxford, 1984)
- Wilcox, Clyde, *God's Warriors: the New Christian Right in America* (Baltimore, 1992)
- Willets, David, *Modern Conservatism* (Harmondsworth, 1992)
- Wilkinson, Alan, *Christian Socialism: Scott Holland to Tony Blair* (London, 1998)
- Williamson, Philip, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999)
- Willner, Ann Ruth, *Charismatic Political Leadership: A Theory* (Princeton, 1968)
- Wilson, Bryan, *Religion in Secular Society* (London, 1966)
- 'Religion and the Secular State' in S.J.D. Green & R.C. Whiting (eds.), *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.325-340
- Woodhead, Linda, Paul Heelas & David Martin (eds.), *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion* (London, 2001)
- Wolffe, John (ed.), *The Growth of Religious Diversity, Britain from 1945: A Reader* (Newcastle, 1994)
- (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* (London, 1995)
- Woolley, Richard, *The Influence of William Temple and R.H. Tawney on New Labour* (Lampeter, 2007)
- Wright, Anthony, *R.H. Tawney* (Manchester, 1987)
- Young, Hugo, *One of us: A biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London, 1989)

Unpublished Secondary Material

- Burton, Edson, 'From Assimilation to Anti-Racism: the Church of England's Response to Afro-Caribbean Migration 1948-1981' (PhD thesis, University of West of England, 2004)
- La'Porte, Victoria Anne, 'The Satanic Verses Controversy: Muslim and Secular Reactions' (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 1996)
- Skinner, Robert A., 'The Roots of "Solidarity": Race, Religion and the Social and Moral Foundations of British Anti-Apartheid Activism 1946-58' (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2004)
- Weller, Paul, 'The Salman Rushdie Controversy, Religious Plurality and Established Religion in England' (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1996)

Website resources

Faith in the City, downloadable version

www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/urbanaffairs/faithinthecity/

Conservative Party election manifestos: www.conservativemanifesto.com

Margaret Thatcher on-line archive: www.margaretthatcher.org

Office for National Statistics: www.statistics.gov.uk